A Long Way To Go

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A Long Way To Go

by JustMeAndLife (CaramelCreamCoffee)

Summary

Shane experiences a cryptic pregnancy and gives birth during his and Ilya's first game against the Metros. He deals with the aftermath and struggles to adjust whilst suffering from postpartum depression . Scared of losing Ilya and ruining his daughter's life he finds himself breaking down and in fear of what he's become.

Notes

Heyyyy!!! So this is basically my take on what would happen if Shane experienced a cryptic pregnancy during The Long Game. It doesn't follow canon so some things are definitely different but for the sake of the AU please persevere!

Inspired by a comment I saw someone make, not sure who but credit to them! It said 'A baby would prevent Ilya from spiralling into a depression, but send Shane straight down that hole' I couldn't agree more! If Mpreg existed in canon that is exactly how it would go! :))

Enjoyyyyyy !!!

For as long as Shane can remember his whole world had centred around Hockey.

The ice had been his safe place. The place he had felt the most free. Out on the ice he could hide away , shield himself from the reality of his feelings and all of the outside noise trying to push its way in. Out on the ice he could pretend he was normal , that his brain did fuzz in certain situations, that he didn't panic during social gatherings and have sensory overload over 'small things.' Hockey had been his thing, something he felt he had full control over. Something that didn't need him to explain why he is the way he is.

Until he met Ilya.

Meeting Ilya changed things.

Falling in love with Ilya... that changed everything.

Shane found a safe place within the company of another human being. Something he never thought he'd be able to do. He found comfort and strength. His confidence built and his little quirks no longer felt so overwhelming different. Ilya loved him, he loved him despite the hardships and the constant explaining that came along with dating somebody on the spectrum. Hockey wasn't his thing anymore.

Ilya was.

The shift had been gradual. It had taken him years to even admit that he was ready to put something ahead of hockey. But the fear he felt that day of the plane crash had been enough to force him out of his head. He would never have forgiven himself if Ilya had died that day believing Shane loved a simple sport more than he loved him. Because god did he love him. He loved him so much it hurt to physically breathe some days. The saying love hurts couldn't be anymore accurate if it tried.

There was something so devastatingly, beautiful about being so in love with someone that you feel you'd genuinely die without them.

They'd gone from being clueless teenagers, to rookies, to rivals, to lovers, to boyfriends, to husbands. It had taken them over a decade to get to the point they were finally at. But Shane wouldn't change a single piece of their journey. It was theirs and that's what made it so special.

They were currently a few hours away from playing their first game as husbands and Shane was struggling to motivate himself. And the best part of it all? They were playing against the Metros. It should be one of the best days of their career and yet he just couldn't bring himself to move out of bed. There was this dull , ache setting deep within his lower back and it was really taking the shine away from the situation.

"Shane? You okay? You seem .. off." Ilya murmured, hand stroking through the limp hair lying flat on his boyfriend's head.

"I'm okay. I think I over did it a little in practice. My back is killing me." Shane informed, sleepy eyes blinking up at Ilya as the younger man frowned in concern.

"Did you pull something?"

"Erm I don't think so. I mean, I would have felt it if I had so probably not. Must be my first sign getting old."

Ilya chuckled softly in amusement. "You're barely past thirty years old Hollander. You've got plenty of years left in you."

"It's only a few months away. The big three zero. Came around waaayy too quickly." Shane groaned.

"Hmm, maybe. But you are married man now yes? Getting old shouldn't be so sad. You have sexy Russian to grow old with."

"You think way too highly of yourself Rozanov."

"Ah yes, I am asshole remember?" Ilya smirked.

Shane huffed. "The biggest asshole I know."

"But you love me?"

"I do, I love you way too fucking much."

The younger man beamed. One of those rare smiles only Shane would ever bear witness to. "I love you too. I do have bad news though."

"Oh yeah?" Shane frowned in confusion.

"Hmm, I'm afraid we must get up. Nap time is over and we have game soon." Ilya told him. "Ottawa is counting on us."

"Urgh, I was hoping you'd say something along the lines of 'I don't think you should play today'." The older grumbled, begrudgingly pulling himself up out of his warm cocoon.

"Since when does Shane Hollander wish to not play Hockey?" Ilya gasped playfully. "Somebody call Doctor! My husband is not okay!"

"Shhh! Don't even joke about calling a doctor! I'm paranoid enough about this pain in my back as it is!" Shane whined.

"You will be fine." Ilya tried to assure. "You probably fell to sleep in funny way."

"Yeah maybe..." Shane agreed, neglecting to mention that the pain had started off minor and was slowly increasing. "Let's get ready to head out. I'll shower first."

"Okay, moya lyubov'."

His hope that the hot shower would soothe his aching muscles lasted all of five minutes. The relief he first felt stroking beneath the spray disappearing as the pain in his back reared its ugly head once more. Shane couldn't help but feel the worry beginning to set in. The waves of pain seemed to come in waves , almost as if something inside of his was grumbling. His appendix maybe? No, the pain for your appendix was usually in your stomach. It couldn't be that.

Then again, he was no medical professional.

"Baby? Shame? We need to hurry up." Ilya called through the bathroom door.

"I'm coming!" He answered, forcing himself to step out from under the warm spray. "You can go to the car I'll be right there I promise."

"Okay, if you're sure?" Ilya checked.

Shane nodded before remembering the younger man couldn't see him through doors. "Positive."

The sound of Ilya's footsteps trailing away had him sagging with relief. A low moan slipping past his lips as the pain in his back continued to throb. He prayed the god the sharp cramps that came along with it every once in a while would hold off for the game. The whole team had been looking forward to this game for months now. Ever since they had gotten married. Everyone had been gushing about Team Hollanov and how amazing it would be seeing them fully committed to not only one another but the game. He couldn't let them down.

By the time he made it out to their car, Ilya's brow was furrowed deep in concern.

"You are red like eh- flushed?" Ilya tried, asking whether his translation to English was correct.

"Ah yeah, the shower was really hot." Shane tried to brush off.

"You do not like hot showers. Is too much sensory overload."

It melted his heart to know how well Ilya knew his little quirks. However, it also annoyed the hell out of him because it meant he couldn't lie his way out of this one. "Right, it was faulty I guess? I kept having to step out that's why I took so long."

"Ah." The younger quipped, focus on the road as he clenched his jaw.

"I'm okay Ilya, I promise."

"Whatever you say Hollander."

The car ride to the rink was absolute torture. Every bump in the road only added to the nerve grinding pain growing between Shane's hips. He was starting to worry that maybe this had something to do with his old groin injury. Had he caused old damage to flare up during practice? Surely not?

"Hey guys!" Troy's voice sounds , cutting through Shane's inner turmoil. "Running a little late aren't you? I thought you'd both be early! Big day!"

"Shane isn't feeling good. Needed a lay down before we came." Ilya explained, eyes showing just how concerned he was for his husband's wellbeing.

"Oh? Are you sure you should be playing buddy?" Troy quizzed, eyes locking on the other man.

"I'll be fine. Stop worrying so much Rozanov, we need your head to be in the game. You can't lose focus because of me. You'll prove all the haters right. We cannot lose this game." Shane exclaimed.

"I do not care about the game when you're feeling like this Shane. Do not lie to ease my worry. You're not okay." Ilya argued.

"Oh fuck off Rozanov. I can't do this right now." Shane raged, storming away from his husband. Head hung low as he entered the locker room. The team instantly sensing the tense atmosphere surrounding him. A few shattering away from the door. Great, so they heard all of that.

"Yo, Shane? You okay? You look a little pale." Wyatt asked, clearly oblivious to what the rest of his team mates had heard outside.

"All good, just nerves. Big game for me today." Shane shrugged him off. Forcing himself to breathe as another cramp wracked through his exhaustion frame. "I-Ilya will be in here soon. You better get ready guys." He choked out.

"Right, okay."

The team were clever enough to know that was code for 'shut the fuck up and don't mention it again.'

Shane had hoped that maybe getting out on the ice would stretch out his muscles and settle the on going stomach cramps. Unfortunately, hope apparently breeds eternal misery. The pains were happening more frequently now , lasting way longer than they ever had before, and hurting more. One manages to hit him right in the middle of a face-off with Hayden, hitting him out of nowhere and causing him such agony that he actually groans and leans forward.

"You okay, Hollander?" Hayden asks, voice filled with concern for his best friend. The only metro who actually gave a shit about what happens to Shane these days.

"I don't know, stomach and back have been off all day." Shane replied, nose scrunched in pain as he pants his way through the last of the cramp. The referee non the wiser by the looks of things.

"Shit and Rozanov still let you play?" Hayden asked in surprise.

"Rozanov doesn't control my life Pike!" Shane snapped. Muscles protesting once more as he hissed a breath between clenched teeth. He can see the shock taking over Hayden's features. Shane never got angry like this, not at him anyway. Something was wrong.

The referee blows the whistle. Hayden of course, wins the face-off, Shane is too busy forcing himself to stay upright to care about anything anymore. His mind and body are more than ready for this shit show to be over. It's too much.

He eventually pulls himself together enough to skate towards the action, eyes locking on the time every chance he got. He had literal minutes until the period ends, giving him just enough time to get his shit together. Ilya was stressing, he could see it the way his blue eyes glistened.

Shane could practically see his heart lodged in his throat. Ilya knew him better than anyone, he knew he was struggling to even stay upright right now.

The buzzer eventually blares, signaling the end of the period. By some miracle he manages to hear it over the constant rush of blood pounding in his ears. Shane never thought he'd see the day where he found himself rushing off of the ice so quickly. His skates are off in a matter of minutes, and he practically sprints to the locker room, ignoring his husband's desperate calls from behind.

"God fucking damn it." He groaned, leaning forwards to grip the edge of the bench as the pain clenched around his insides.

"Shane? malysh? What is happening?" Ilya's voice spoke, cracking through his pained moans.

"I-I don't know, fuck it keeps getting worse." Shane practically sobbed, turning to bury his face into Ilya's shoulder.

"Your back?"

The older man nodded. "A-and my stomach. God it feels like some lit a fucking blow torch in there."

"We need to call ambulance." Ilya stated calmly. "You cannot play like this."

"No-no I'm-" Shane tried to fight back, but the pain overwhelmed him once more and he found himself reluctantly nodding along with his husband's words. "O-okay, you're right. You're right. Fuck I think I'm dying."

"Do not say that. You are fine Hollander." The Russian soothed, his heart pounding harder than ever before. Fear gripping every bit of his being.

"I'm not, I'm not fine Ilya. I'm scared." Shane whimpered, finally allowing himself to cry out as a new pain wrapped its way around his centre. "Hurts so bad."

"Shh is okay, is okay." Ilya breathed out shakily, lips pressing into his sweat damp hair. "Let's get you out of your gear, you're too hot."

"Hmm, it's usually a lot sexier when you say that." Shane moaned, allowing Ilya to strip him until he was down to his under shirt and pants.

Hayden rounded the corner at that very moment.

"What the hell is going on? Shane you-" He paused taking in the sight of his best friend clearly struggling through agonising pain. "Fuck."

"Pike?! Hayden?!" Ilya snapped, trying to break the other man out of his frozen state. "I need you to get it together , call ambulance da?!"

Hayden stammered, hands shaking as he fumbled to grab a hold of the phone Ilya was handing over towards him. "Shit okay, it's gonna be okay bud." He soothed, free hand gripping Shane's shoulder.

"Why is it hurting so bad?" Shane sobbed, his tears soaking through the layers of clothing over Ilya's chest.

Troy and Wyatt rushed into the room, the commotion drawing more and more people's attention. Attention Shane didn't need.

"Do you guys need us to do anything?" Troy asked, immediately stepping up despite his shock.

"Can you grab the medics for us?" Hayden asked. "Then you guys can stand guard, make sure no other fuckers come in here. Got it?"

"Sure thing." Wyatt nodded , Troy rushing ahead of him as they both made their exit.

"Shane? Sweetheart we need to move you to somewhere comfortable." Ilya reasoned, hands moving Shane's face so that the older man is looking up at him.

"N-no , fuck! Please, please don't move me, it hurts so fucking much." Shane begged, every movement he made felt like it was crippling every part of his body. "Ilya, fuck you need to help me."

"Why don't we get you resting back again the bench yeah? I'll grab some towels to cushion the floor a little." Hayden suggested, waiting for Shane's nod before he rushed off to grab some towels from the shower room.

They're slowly sliding him down to the floor when the door to the locker room opens and the on sight paramedics announce themselves, two names that Shane, thankfully, isn't familiar with. The last thing he needed was more people he knew seeing him in this state. Ilya practically sobs in relief as they continue to ask questions, Hayden answering them as best as he can with limited information. Shane barely manages to give a grunt in response as another pain hits him.

"Let's see what we have here." The medics voice is soft. Soothing. The same tone his mom has used on him when he's having a sensory meltdown or struggling through a panic attack. He wants to scream, claw at things, punch walls and break windows. Anything to stop this never ending agony he found himself experiencing. "I'm Mya , it's nice to meet you Shane. Can I take a look at you?"

Shane opens his mouth to respond but instead a sob of pain gets punched out of him and a sudden gush of fluid soaks the towels and pants he's wearing.

"Oh dear." Mya is at least five, maybe more years younger than them and Shane can feel that she's leaning into the medical knowledge she learnt only months ago. She wasn't panicking; but there was a tone to her voice that shows how unexpected the situation is. "Matty," she turns to the man still standing at the door. "Can you grab me the baby bag please?."

Ilya froze.

Baby? What the fuck is she talking about? What baby?

"Well you're looking in pretty good shape, must be all the hockey you play. Not too often we see dads who are this far a long in pregnancy able to play with such ease. How far along are you exactly? Did you have a check up recently?"

"What?" Shane and Ilya say it at the same time.

Mya just looks at them confused. "Your water just broke."

"My water?" Shane gapped. "What are you talking about?! What's going on?!"

"You're in labor."

"No, no I'm not."

"Oh dear," she says again, and Shane is horrified.

She is most definitely way too young and inexperienced to be telling him this. Not to be judgemental and all but she was completely insane! Male pregnancies aren't exactly unheard of, but Shane isn't— He isn't.

He knows about carriers of course. He was told by his coaches that testing was now available. They were looking at making it a mandatory requirement in the NHL. Shane has seen pregnant men on the street in passing. It's 2022, people don't need to hide things like that anymore.

"No." He violently shakes his head. "No, I... I didn't. I'm not. That's not possible."

"Shane?" Ilya looks just as shell shocked as he feels. "Are you- is okay if you knew and were scared. But are you?"

"NO!" He insists harder now. He's not. He can't be.

Can he?

"Shane it's okay man. It's going to be fine." Hayden soothed, seeing his best friend spiralling faster and faster. "Just breathe yeah?"

"You good to stay just like that for a second? I'm going to check everything is okay. We need to get an idea of how dilated you are." Mya asked kindly.

Shane doesn't look, he can't bring himself to. He just nods his head awkwardly. Hiccuping on sobs of pain as his legs are suddenly bare of the cold wet fabric that had been clinging to him. Ilya and Hayden both held onto his hands, both trying their best to keep him calm as this stranger entered an area he'd much rather she kept away from. "Well I'd say we're just about ready to meet baby you two. You're at 10 centimetres Shane."

"Baby?!" Shane breathes, panicked eyes looking towards his husband . He thinks he's going to cry. This can't be happening.

"We've got this is okay," Ilya insists. "Do you want me to sit behind you ? I can hold you closer."

"I can't - this isn't. I'm wet." He sounds hysterical even to his own ears and Ilya tucks him in closer in response.

"Shhh shhh shhh. You're good. We're good. You don't have to worry moya lyubov."

"If I give birth we can't finish the game- we - they'll win-Ilya- OOOOOOOOH!" This pain shifts everything and Shane can't help but rock both himself side to side. Hands flat against the floor. "We were supposed to prove them wrong-"

"We can still do this. You already are." Ilya stated calmly, "Isn't that right Hayden?"

"Too right it is! The Metro's know that you're one thousand times better than any of us." Hayden tried to assure. Shane only shaking his head in disbelief.

"N-no you don't get it!" Shane cried out.

"We're going to get baby out together." Mya is probably trying to be reassuring but he's crying for real now. Hysterically crying in a way he never had before.

He didn't even want a baby right now. He wasn't sure he ever would want one at all.

"How's it coming out?" He rambled, his whole frame shaking in agony and nerves.

"Same way it got in, love."

"I don't even know how that happened." Shane's face is completely soaked with tears. They run down his cheeks and neck and catches on the collar of his white T-shirt.

"Hey, Shane. Buddy. I'm right here. Look at me." Hayden presses.

Shane tilts his head to the side just far enough to meet Hayden's eyes. He's still got most of his weight leaning on Ilya. His hands holding so tightly on to both of their hands that he can see white marks around them. "You're - Hayden please don't go okay?."

"I'm here. I'm here with you alright? And so is Rozanov. Shane, you can do this."

"Okay Shane. Matty here has something called Entonox alright, I'm sure you've seen it before." Mya explained, reaching out to take the mouthpiece and tubing from her colleague. "We usually use it for dislocations and breaks. But it can also help with the contractions. It's a 50/50 mix of Nitrous oxide and Oxygen. Many women and men in the UK use it a main form of pain relief during childbirth so don't worry. It's safe."

"And this will help?" Ilya asked, eyes flipping between the mouthpiece and his husband's pain filled features.

"It most certainly will." Matty replied, nodding in assurance.

"Shane?" Ilya spoke softly, trying his best to coax his husband back to reality and out of his bubble of never ending pain.

"I-I don't know I- Oh Fuck!" A contraction cut Shane off short. The labouring man immediately scrabbling to get a hold of the mouthpiece.

"There we go, nice deep breaths Shane!" Mya coached. "It should take the edge off."

He nods and breathes in and out into the mouthpiece until the contraction begins to fade away again. When he finally opens his eyes and blinks blearily, his head feels a little spacey. There was a growing pressure between his thighs and he couldn't help but shuffle awkwardly against the tiled floor.

"There's so much pressure- It's really a baby?." He murmurs, grimacing as he tries to pull his legs up higher and relieve the ever growing pain.

"Yes dude, it's really a baby." Hayden chuckles wearily. His panic showing slightly within the tone of his voice.

Shane blinks again and looks up, feels himself begin to become a little more present as Ilya soothes him and pushes back the fringe of his hair from his sweat coated forehead.

"Hollander?" He asks quietly, his eyes soft and a little worried. "Are you okay?"

Shane nods and swallows, flexing his fingers where they still clutch at the nitrous pipe. "This shits so good," he says, a slight slur to his voice, and Hayden can't help but snort in amusement.

"Bet it is. First time getting high huh?" His best friend teased. The light atmosphere once again being broken by a new contraction rearing its ugly head.

"Oww no please." Shane whined; teeth clenching down on the mouthpiece and he began to suck in desperate breaths.

"Shane," Mya says, and he looks down between his legs and sees the medic sat there and looking at him with gentle eyes. "This is the part everyone hates okay, I want you to listen to me and keep breathing that gas and air okay? On the next one I need you to start pushing. Nice deep pushes right down into that pressure. Hold them for ten okay? Baby is ready to meet you and it's not safe for us to hold off any longer."

The tears immediately start up again. Ilya's heart breaking at the gut wrenching sobs wracking throughout the older man's frame: he would do anything to switch their places right now.

"I-I can't have a baby I can't!" Shane cried out, lungs taking in breath after breath of pain relief.

"But you are, so let's focus now. Nice big pushes and they will be here in not time I promise you. I understand this is a shock, but you need to channel all of this emotion into getting this kid the hell out." Matty stepped in, helping Mya soothe Shane's inner panic.

The next contraction comes quickly and Shane can only give in and do as asked. He focuses on Ilya's touch and Hayden's encouragement as he finally caves and follows his body's instincts. Breathing deeply in and out into the mouthpiece of the gas and air.

"That's it." Mya encourages loudly as Shane moans in discomfort . "That's the way Shane!"

"Fucking hurts so bad."

Hayden couldn't help but wince in sympathy. "I can't even imagine brother."

"D-don't look okay? Whatever you do don't fucking- ahhhh." Shane growled, words trailing off as he body help down another solid push.

"You got it, trust me I do not plan on looking anywhere south of the equator." His best friend cringed, eyes locked on Shane's face.

There was a few seconds of silence. Just enough time for Ilya to feel as though the walls were caving in on them. How was this happening? They'd always been so careful...

"Oh god, it's starting again." Shane choked out, biting the gas and air tube to stifle his cries.

"Then go for it Shane! Give me a nice solid push, go on. Pull those legs back." Mya encouraged, watching as Shane did as he was told , taking in a breath as he pushed down the best he could. Both Hayden and Ilya reaching down to help pull back a thigh. The medic was quick to slip her fingers in, working to help stretch and massage the cervix gently as the pregnant man cried out in shock at the shooting pain and pressure consuming his lower half. "Alright it's okay, two more seconds Shane , I'm sorry." She soothed, it was better to do this than have him push against a tensing cervix for another twenty minutes. "There we go! You've got this okay, next one push long and hard. Ilya will count you down. Right Mr Rozanov?"

"Push for ten, remember?" Ilya reassured, nodding numbly when Shane looked at him in a panic, pulling the gas and air from his mouth.

"I-okay, I can do this right?" Shane whimpered, throwing his head back as he looked at the celling. "Fuck I never wanted a baby Ilya."

"Of course you can! I know it is not in your plans. But It's almost time to meet them now. We cannot stop this Hollander, keep fighting through yes?"

Shane felt as his body began to prepare for another contraction, the familiar burning pain returning as he gasped. Ilya cuddling in closer so his chest was pressed against the side of his husband's head. "Oh, shit, here comes...fuck!" Ilya watched as his head came up off of the bench and curled in to his chest as much as possible, straining to push as he was instructed.

"That's it Shane , Keep going baby..... 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2...1." Ilya praised, counting down slowly, smiling shakily at the sheer determination Shane was showing ."Deep breath now okay? And we go again!"

Holding his breath, Shane repeated his push, channelling everything he had down into his birth canal. Everything ached and he felt as though his body was shaking from head to toe. But pushing felt good, it felt as though he finally had some control.

"Great push!" Mya cheered as she carefully wiped the area clear of fluid. "Just Go easy for a second. It's a pretty small squeeze for baby and I want to let you stretch a bit."

"N-no I Can't...oh, god- you can't expect me to - Stop now ....'!" Shane screeched and bore down. "Need them out now! Need this over!"

"I know you do, but let's not rush them too much!They need room to get out and waiting a contraction out every now and again will help him move okay?" The medic pressed.

"She's right man, Jackie's labor and delivery nurses had her do the same. It helps your body prepare down .. y'know what I mean." Hayden gestured downward , trying his best to support.

"Mmm, Can I push?" Shane whimpered, the pain coming back, leaving him helpless it's it grip.

"Go ahead, you know your body. Just stop if it feels too much okay?" Matty told him, a small warning added into his tone as he hovered over Mya's shoulder.

Shane quickly nodded , heaving in another breath of gas and air before holding down another solid push. The pain was ridiculous, he couldn't wrap his head around why anyone would want to go through this willingly?! What would the hell would possess them to even think about it?! His lower half felt as though it would split in two if he pushed any harder ,

but he knew in the end he'd have no choice. This baby needed to come out whether he wanted them to or not, whether the pain got too much or not.

"Gah-Ahhh, fuck me this hurts!" Shane shouted.

"Oh trust me I know, I had my first at eighteen. Wasn't the best experience of my life ." Mya chuckled , fingers circling the younger mans opening. "But you have to keep pushing through."

"H-how long will this take?" Shane yelped, taking in another gulp of gas, there was no way he wasn't high at this point.

"A while if you don't shut up and stop talking." Hayden joked. Ilya and Mya both throwing him a glare before Shane was cringing in pain once again. "Go again come on!" He cheered, moving on from his awful comedic timing.

The labouring man gave it his all and pushed as hard as he possibly could. Soon enough he found himself falling into a rhythm of pushing in silence. Shouting wasted energy and he couldn't afford to lose anymore than he already had. So he settled for gritting his teeth and letting slip the occasional whimper of pain as he let the push go and relaxed back onto the solid edge of the bench. There was times when he wanted to scream, then close his legs together and beg for them to knock him and out and cut him open. But he didn't want to let this beat him, he could do this. He had to.

What came next didn't matter right now. He just wanted this nightmare to end.

Another ten minutes went by before Ilya and Hayden knew it. Shane was doing incredibly well, and they were both beyond proud of him .

Ilya couldn't help but tell him how beautiful he looked and how proud of him he was. Of course Shane only snapped back about how he was completely blindsided by all of this. How the pain is on a level he never knew possible and he was sweating like a pig , barely managing to take a deep breath through all of his panting and crying.

"Try to breathe, love." Ilya soothed pushing back his lovers damp hair. "You won't do your self any good struggling like this."

"I-I'm trying , really I am." Shane whispered as he grimaced in pain and let out a sob. He looked towards the medic between his legs in painful frustration. "Does this kids freaking head plan on coming out anytime soon?"

"I promise you the head is right there. We will be able to see it on the next push and then you'll only need a couple more pushes to get this baby crowning. It's hard and it's painful and it's frustrating. But use that frustration to push Shane , help them out." Mya spoke sternly, rubbing his thigh as a small encouragement.

She could practically see the fear wafting off of him in waves and her heart ached in sympathy.

The next few pushes came hard and fast, Ilya barely catching the medics words as she called for him to take a look. Their baby's head was appearing just behind Shane's opening , they weren't quite crowning but they were definitely nearly there. "Oh wow, S-Shane. Holy fuck Hollander that's a baby- that's our- shit." He gasped in shock.

"F-fuck Ilya what the fuck!?" Shane strained, pushing down as he watched his husband's face go slack with awe.

"I know, I know. Is a lot." Ilya choked out . "Keep pushing , they'll be out soon okay?."

"Holy fucking shit!" Shane cursed , curling in on his stomach as he pushed, feeling the baby's head slide out further. "Gah! Fuck! this hurts so fucking much!"

Mya looked up at him sympathetically , nodding in understanding. "I know. I know it does. It's about to get a whole lot worse when they start crowning but you have to push through it! Push all the way down honey, until I tell you to stop! Let's get this head out."

Shane hummed, the gas and air was barely doing anything, but he took another breath of it anyway in the hopes it'd give him enough adrenaline to push down. Ilya squeezed his shoulder, pressing kisses to his neck as he finally gave in and gave a solid enough push with a strangled yelp. Fuck this! This was hell.

"Arghh! Ilya, fuck Ilya!" The pregnant man panicked, the burning at his opening hitting an all time high as the head fully crowned against his stretched rim. They could forget the being quite plan! This was the worst thing he'd ever felt in his life. "Ilya, I can't!"

"They're coming baby , they are crowning , this is the worst part medic says okay? you've got it." Ilya cooed, keeping his mouth pressed to Shane's temple as his husband managed another push. His heart shattered at the pained scream Shane managed to let slip past his lips.

Shane knew how ridiculous he sounded , he could hear the moans and pants escaping his mouth as he forced himself to push through the firey burn. The pressure against his entrance was unbearable, he would never be the same down there! There was no way in hell he'd come back from it! "Y-you! Fuck I could kill you! You and your fucking charming ass smile! Why the fuck did is this happening to me?!!" He snapped towards Ilya, screaming as the head pushed forwards once more. "Gahhh!"

"There we go Shane ! You're at baby's forehead come on, short pushes on exhale!" The medic called over his cries, helping push the skin over the top of the baby's head. Tutting as the skin split causing Shane to cry out in pure agony and slam his head against the rolled up towel Hayden had placed behind his head.

"Come on Shane, little breathes now! Let them come slowly , do not force them out." Ilya encouraged, wincing as he saw the small tear happen, completely mesmerised watching as his soon to be child's face came out into the world inch , by inch.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck." Shane sobbed , feeling as the head slipped out to its widest point. "Please just get it out! Get it out!" He screamed , gasping as he managed to push the baby's head out with a rush of fluids.

"Heads out!" Mya cried in relief. "Everything looks okay so far. You're in the home stretch , come on you've got this Shane!."

"Is it real?" The younger panted, head flopping forwards away from the edge as the medic cleared the apparent baby's airways.

"They seem pretty real to me." Mya smiled in sympathy. "You are doing really well. Considering the shock this little one has caused. I'm sure the whole place is in meltdown because of them."

"O-oh my god." Shane whimpered , his heart beating over time at the thought of having a literal human being basically half way out of his body.

"It's rare you see this, a baby having such a full head of hair . It's pretty adorable." Mya cooed , taking notice of the baby's thick black locks. Gently apologising at Shane's wince when she tried to scrunch the blood flow of his tear. "Airways look good and cord is clear, you can go ahead and give me some nice strong pushes and we should have a baby."

Shane nodded his head, finally dropping the gas and air tube to wrap his hands around his thighs, he needed this kid out. The next contraction took his breath away and as he pushed all he could focus on was Ilya . The younger man was crying tears of pure shock and worry. But beneath all of the shock he looked so relieved and eager to meet their surprise child. It was all he needed to force himself to keep going. Giving a solid push as he felt the shoulders begin to push out. Mya making quick work to hook her delicate fingers under the small baby's armpits and tug gently.

"Gah, Ah , ah! Don't pull!" Shane whimpered , crying as the burning pain returned as each shoulder slowly pushed through with the help of his midwife. "Ilya'!"

"I've got you baby, look down Hollander, they're right there. They're coming out!" The other man choked out, forcing Shane to open his eyes and look down as he pushed.

"One more!" The medics called , Mya smiling happily as Shane screamed and bore down one final time. Their tiny baby slipping out into the world in a rush of blood and fluid.

"Ah! Ow, ah." Shane panted. "Holy s-shit, I-is it out? D-did I get it out?" He babbled , tears falling at an alarming rate. Body shaking as the shock and adrenaline ran its cause.

"They're out." Matty assured, stepping in to rub the baby over and get their little lungs kick started. "Come on little one, let's hear you huh?"

The baby squeaked, a wet hiccup following soon after as they finally sucked in their first shaky breath. A shrill cry piercing the air in a way that sent Ilya's heart into overdrive. That was the sound of their child, theirs.

"S-Shane?" He whispered brokenly, eyes flicking between the screaming infant and his exhausted husband.

"I-I need my mom Ilya, call my mom please." Shane whispered, head dropping to Hayden's shoulder.

"Congrats Daddy, she's a little on the small side but ten fingers, ten toes. Lungs like a pterodactyl. Blanket please, Mya. We're gonna get you both on the stretcher and take you to the hospital." Matty stated, grinning ear to ear.

Completely oblivious to that fact that Shane was beginning to disassociate.

Ilya goes to pull back so that he can accept their daughter - holy shit they have a daughter now. But before he has chance to take her Shane clutches onto tightly. "Don't. No, Ilya please don't leave."

"Shane, we need to move you."

"Please don't."

"Hayden is going to help move you but you do need to move."

"She's right here." Matty tries to voice again and Shane turns his head the other way. "Do you want to h-"

"Stop! Please! No I don't want to- take her away please." Shane sobs desperately, face burying into Hayden's neck as he tries to block out the blaring lights and noises surrounding him.

"Hey, hey. Is okay. You're okay moya lyubov." Ilya is everywhere around him. Arms tight. "We need to move okay? You got this. Can I let you go so I can hold her?"

Shane nods, breath catching as he finally allows his husband to step away. The second Ilya moved away from him Shane squeezed his eyes shut so he didn't have to see. He couldn't face reality. Not yet.

"Hello little one. I'm your papa. You're perfect- oh devochka." Ilya whispers. His arms accepting the weight of his daughter effortlessly.

Shane looks up at that, he couldn't resist. He felt sick to his stomach and everything below felt so raw and open. Like his nerve endings were on literal fire. But his eyes were set on his husband.

Ilya's cheeks were covered in tears but his eyes were bright and he was staring down at that little mess of blankets like they held his entire universe. It's the one thing Shane manages to hold onto. That mental image of Ilya living in this moment. His first moments as a father. Holy shit.

Shane barely registers as they shuffle him on to a stretcher, strap him down and wheel him out the door. Hayden follows close behind looking pale as he tries his best to keep them both as sane as possible.

"I'll call your mom and dad Shane. Tell them to meet us at the hospital . Do you want me to tell them about the baby or-?"

"N-no don't tell them please! I don't want them knowing until I've - fuck I don't even know." Shane sobbed, body trembling as he struggled to catch his breath. "Everyone's going to be looking."

"Nobody is looking Shane." Ilya assured. "Security have us protected don't worry. I have the baby safe."

The baby... fuck. He just had a baby.

"O-okay." Shane managed to respond, a soft hiccup catching in his throat as fresh sobs threatened to escape his exhausted form. "M'sorry, I don't understand how this happened."

"Do not apologise." Mya assured, her and Matty rushing the stretcher through the back hallways. "You're in shock, you're allowed to feel whatever it is you're feeling. If crying helps, then you cry okay? Just be sure to let me know if the contractions start up again."

Shane instantly panicked. "Contractions? W-what? But the baby is out-"

"It's for the placenta Shane. The thing that helps the baby survive and get enough nutrients." Hayden jumped in. "Nothing to worry about, they'll be softer right? My wife always says they hurt way less than the contractions before."

"They can be yes. But as your friend explained, there's absolutely nothing to worry about Shane. Just relax. We'll get you both to the hospital safely."

Shane didn't even acknowledge the reassurance. He couldn't even bring himself to catch his breath. Everything was a never ending blur of sensory overload and unwanted attention.

He wanted it to be over. He wanted to go home.

"She's five pounds, ten ounces." Ilya spoke softly, eyes locked on the tiny bundle sleeping peacefully in the plastic bassinet. "So small."

Shane hummed, unable to bring himself to take a closer look just yet. "I'm surprised she didn't need more help.. like the NICU or whatever."

"No, she is breathing well on her own and she managed to have a small amount of bottle. The nurse said you can feed her from chest yes?" Ilya asked, eyes looking up towards his exhausted husband.

"Erm yeah, but I'm not so sure I'm gonna do that." Shane stated, fingers fiddling with the loose string of the blanket covering his lower half.

"Oh?"

"Yeah- I erm- I never really wanted to have a baby y'know? For the simple reason of I don't like feeling out of control. Chestfeeding means leaking, smelling and constantly being attached to her- I need my space Ilya. My time to just- be me."

Ilya nodded in understanding. "Okay, is okay Shane. I respect your choice. Is your body after all. I have no say."

"Thankyou." Shane nodded, answer short of he tried his best to shut off his brain. It was screaming at him to run. To hide away from all of this. But he couldn't, whether he liked it or not. He was a dad now. Their little girl was depending on them. "C-can you bring her over here? Please?"

"Of course I can." Ilya murmured, heart beating overtime as he bent down to scoop their small being into his arms. "Come now.." he cooed as she began to whimper softly. "Papa khochet poznakomit'sya s toboy, malyshka. Da, daddy wants to see you."

Daddy. The word made Shane freeze up. It was weighted with responsibility and reality.

"Okay, here we are." Ilya said, moving to place their girl into Shane's hold.

"N-no, wait." Shane stammered."Just lay her against my legs please, I just want to see her."

His husband hesitated, before following along with what the older man wanted. Laying the tiny girl so that she was flat against Shane's thighs, her little feet kicking against his stomach as she wiggled.

"Oh." Shane breathed, hands staying at his side as he eyed their baby with curiosity. "S-she kinda looks like me huh?"

Ilya snickered in amusement. "She looks exactly like you Hollander. Only part of me is her nose and mole."

Shane swallowed thickly, looking closely at her features. She had a thick mop of black hair, softly curling towards the ends. With long , dark eyelashes to match. Her pouty lips a perfect match to his own, whilst her nose seemed to be a mini replica of her papa's. A small mole lay to the side of her lip, almost identical to Ilya's , though not in placement. Hers was smaller and softer. Amazing.

She's beautiful, like a tiny porcelain doll. Immaculate and delicate all at once.

"She's cute." He finally uttered, fingers tracing the curve of her button nose.

"She's amazing." Ilya breathed, smile stretching across his face. "Literal perfection."

"You have to say that, you're her dad."

"Her papa."

Shane looked at him, finally taking notice of the tears glistening in his husband's eyes. "Those are happy tears right?"

"Tears of shock mostly." Was the honest reply he received. "Does not seem real yet."

"Tell me about it." Shane mumbled, holding back a wince as his back twinged. "I've got stitches and aches to prove it happened and yet I'm still struggling to wrap my head around it

all."

"Doctor says it was a cryptic pregnancy, means surprise baby." Ilya stated, he was aware of how out of it Shane had been during the first hour of their arrival.

"Why did this happen to us?" The older man asked shakily. "We're so unprepared Ilya. She's going to depend on us so much and I have no idea how I'm going to do that when I can barely hold myself together most days."

"I believe we will survive."

"I don't want to just survive Ilya. I want to do this right; I want to live. Live a life with her and you and not feel like my heads about to explode."

Ilya tutted in sympathy, pulling Shane closer. "Shhh is okay, we don't need to think right now. We can sleep and eat and just- be."

"There's so much we need to do-"

"Hollander it can wait."

Shane sucked in a breath, hands moving to gently lift their baby up , leaning back into the pillows so that she could rest against his chest. "I-I guess she's not so scary when she's quiet like this."

"Too cute to be scary." Ilya agreed, large palm cupping over the back of her head. "She needs a name."

"Fuck." Shane paused. "I don't think I have enough brain capacity to decide that right now."

"Then it can wait, but we should at least think yes?"

"Y-yeah , we can erm- we can speak a few ideas out loud."

Ilya hummed. "I have no idea about first names but I believe her middle name should be in honour of your mother."

"Really?" Shane asked gently, love shining through his exhausted haze.

"Da, of course." Ilya nodded. "She means a lot to us both. Makes the most sense."

"W-what about your mom? She deserves a place in there too."

Ilya swallowed back his tears, sniffling as he pressed a firm kiss to Shane's forehead. "I would love that."

"We will have to figure out a way of combining them. Irina , Yuna is a mouth full." Shane chuckled weakly.

"Hmm, I shall leave that one up to you. You're more creative."

"You think so?"

"I know so."

A knock on the door snapped them out of their bubble, Shane feeling the panic instantly return to his chest. He wasn't prepared for who it may be, whether it be Hayden or his parents who only knew he was admitted to hospital. Not of the surprise grandchild they'd received.

"Shane?" His mother's voice broke him. The tears falling at alarming rates and he tried to calmly pass the baby over into Ilya's arms. When did his hands start shaking so bad?

"M-mom, mom!" Shane sobbed, the woman immediately rushing over to pull him close.

"Shhh it's okay, oh honey it's okay." Yuna cooed, lips pressing kisses into his sweat matted hair. "I've got you Shane."

"I-is that?" David stammered, hovering in the doorway as he eyes flicked between his hysterical son and the baby resting in his son in laws arms.

Ilya nodded hesitantly. "Baby girl Hollander-Rozanov. Born at Three fifty, five. Five pounds, ten ounces."

"Oh." Yuna gasped, free hand coming up to cover her mouth.

"Shane, son." David breathed, rushing over to hug his son. "Are you okay?"

"F-freaking the hell out." Shane cried , hands gripping his parents tighter than he ever had before. "I-I didn't know I swear."

"Trust me honey, I know you didn't know. If you did I think we would have known from the beginning." Yuna soothed, eyes locked on the sleeping bundle in Ilya's hold. "You said baby girl right ? It's a little girl?"

Shane nodded, breath hitching. "Y-yeah he said baby girl. She's very real."

"Oh baby boy." Yuna sighed. Her heartbreaking just knowing how hard this must be for Shane. Change was a huge trigger for him and this? This was the biggest kind of change.

It was life changing.

"M'sorry I know I should be happy but I just- I didn't want this mom." Shane sobbed desperately, Ilya's heart breaking at the sight.

"I know, but it's happened sweetie. All we can do now is support you in whatever decisions need to be made okay?"

"O-okay."

Ilya couldn't help the wave of fear that washed over him. What did Yuna mean? What decisions were there to be made? "What decisions?"

Shane seemed to startle back to himself hearing his husband's alarmed tone. His heart sinking as he caught on to what Ilya had assumed. God he was so stupid. He needs to be more careful about how he phrases things. The younger man was always going to assume the worst when he says 'I didn't want this'.

"Just decisions about how much leave Shane will need to take and childcare. Having a baby is a lot of work honey, you both need a plan set out." Yuna assured.

"And her name." Ilya nodded along. "She needs good , strong name."

David smiled kindly. "Of course she does."

"You want to hold her?" The Russian offered his father in law.

"Can I?" David asked, looking over to Shane for permission.

"Sure." Shane nodded with a sniffle. "S-she's pretty cute to cuddle."

He watched as his father slips back into old habits effortlessly. Hands holding the small girl steady as he gently brought her out of Ilya's arms and into his own. A wide grin splitting across his features as he took in her beauty. "She's so beautiful."

Ilya hummed his agreement, finger reaching out to gently trace his daughter's cheek. "Tiny and pretty."

"Yuna? You want to hold her." David asked his wife, eyes wet with tears as he looked over.

"I-"Yuna hesitated, looking down at her baby boy who was barely holding it together. "You can bring her over, right now I want to hold my boy."

Shane wept openly at that, snuggling in further into his mother's embrace. His dad lowering his arms slightly so that Yuna could catch her first glimpse of her granddaughter.

"Oh honey." She breathed. "She's absolutely perfect."

"Of course she is." Ilya spoke firmly. "She is part Shane."

"And part you." Shane murmured. "You're incredible. I couldn't have gotten through today without you."

"I love you." The younger man spoke lovingly, leaning over to press a kiss against Shane's free hand. "So much."

"I love you more."

Having a baby is a blessing , that's what they always tell you. They always tell you how you don't know true love until you have your own child. Like your heart is living outside of your body.

Ilya Rozanov can confirm that it is in-fact true. At two weeks old their little Koa Yurina Hollander- Rozanov had become the centre of his entire universe, everything he did he did for her. Koa and Shane, they were his dream come true.

Shane had been absolutely incredible.

Watching him be a Godfather to the Pike's kids had always been amazing to watch. But watching him when it was with their baby? Their tiny incapable human that they created out of love. It was even better. It was almost crazy to him how in love he was with the older man. He was everything.

"Oh I really don't wanna leave you baby girl." Ilya mumbled into Koa's hair.

"I really don't want you to leave any of us." Shane spoke from his seat on the couch. "What's another week?"

"Coach needs me back Moyà lyubov, we've spoken about this." The younger man sighed. "Multiple times."

"I know we have, doesn't mean I'm okay with it."

"You have your mother here two days a week, you'll be okay baby. Plus Troy will be over to visit with Harris , that'll be nice no?!"

"But they're not you."

Ilya smiled at him, moving over to sit next to his husband and cuddle into his side. "I love you."

"I love you too, don't know what I'm going to do without you." Shane pouted, pulling his sweater sleeves down over his hands.

"You'll have our little girl and Anya keeping you company."

Right, Anya. Their newest member of the family.

Shane smiled weakly , hand moving to rest over Koa's back as the two week old snuggled in close to her Papa's warm embrace. "You're her favourite."

"No, is not true." Ilya snorted , kissing Koa's soft curls. "She literally cries the second you walk away."

"No she doesn't." Shane informed him. "It's because you're walking away with me."

"Really? Is what you think? Shane you gave birth to her. The bond she has with you will never be broken, trust me sweetheart. You worry for nothing."

Shane knew deep down that Ilya was right, the love he felt for Koa was deeper than any other kind of love he'd ever felt in his life.

Yet he was still so terrified of her. Sometimes he found himself just staring at her as though she was a ticking time bomb about to go off. It's pathetic.

"You should get going." He eventually mumbled, not able to look Ilya in the eye as the younger man frowned.

"Okay, yes , here." Ilya spoke, leaning over to hand Koa to him.

"You can just lay her back down, she's asleep anyway and I need to go pump some more milk for her afternoon feeds." Shane told him, standing before he could take a hold of their daughter.

That was another unsettling thing that had taken over his life.

Chestfeeding.

They'd tried formula for a few days but the ache in his chest and the fact that formula seemed to give Koa more gas, he made the decision to feed her himself. It's the hardest thing he's ever done.

"Okay." Ilya agreed , face showing his concern. "Are your nipples still sore?"

"Yep, starting to really suck." Shane grumbled. "But what can I do. Bottles and pumped chest milk it is."

That was just another thing he was beginning to fail at, feeding his daughter the right way. The way that is best. Straight from the source.

It's as if Ilya could hear his inner turmoil, he instantly replied with his usual pep talk. "At least she takes the bottles Da? It is still your milk Shane. Koa is getting all of the nutrients she needs the most because of this."

"Accept she's not getting them fresh anymore! I-in fact not even we are getting fresh foods these days. It's my responsibility to make sure that we're all eating right whilst you train and-" Shane stopped before he went too far, he was fine. It was just the sleepless nights getting to him. "Sorry. I'm sorry, I'm just exhausted, ignore me."

"It's okay baby, I get it. But I do have to leave now. We will FaceTime when she's awake yes?" Ilya asked , pressing a firm kiss to his lips.

"I promise, now go before my anxiety wakes up and stops you from leaving."

Ilya sighed, leaning down over the bassinet to speak his goodbyes to Koa. "Bye, bye shmel', be good for daddy and your Nana."

"I love you, don't go breaking anything." Shane spoke, watching as his husband walked towards the door.

"I love you more! Tell your mother I'll see her tomorrow and that I love her and David too!"

"I will!"

And just like that Ilya was out the front door and Shane was left alone for the first time in just over two weeks.

He could feel the ache in his chest returning now and it wasn't the kind of ache he got because he needed to feed Koa. No, it was the ache that had been lingering since the moment his baby girl had been born.

Baby blues were a common thing. His mom had said she experienced them for the first two weeks after his birth too. His dad said he could still remember the phone calls they'd have whilst he was working late where she spent the whole call time crying. But she'd gotten over it eventually.

Shane himself however, he was struggling. Struggling harder than he ever had before.

He found himself wondering towards the window to watch as Ilya got into his Jeep. The younger man typing away on his phone quickly, probably alerting Coach that he'd be in soon. Shane didn't move as his husband looked up and blew him a kiss , he just sat and watched out of the window as he slowly drove off down the road. The panic building his chest increasing dramatically as the car disappeared out of sight.

Not now, he couldn't do this now.

"Please.. please... please." He mumbled to himself, pulling on his hair.

He couldn't have a panic attack, not right now, not when he had a baby to care for. His baby, his little Koa, the baby he had carried for nine months without ever knowing, yet somehow his body had linked to her in ways he couldn't explain . She was the most incredible little human.

"I-I can do this." Shane whispered, shakily looking towards the still sleeping baby.

"You're my baby, you're not a stranger, I'm fine..." He whimpered softly. "I know how to care for you, I know what you like and what you don't."

Why did his baby feel like a stranger to him? Why couldn't he show the overwhelming love he felt deep within him for his daughter? Why was his mind making him believe he couldn't do this?

"Fuck..." He sobbed, hands coming up to cover his eyes as he allowed himself to cry out his frustration.

A small newborn squeak causing him to pause, silently praying that his daughter would stay quiet.

But as luck would have it, that little squeak slowly began to turn into whimpers. Koa's delicate arms flailing as she fidgeted around in confusion.

The high pitched noises breaking Shane's heart. It was almost as if she felt alone when waking up.

It was in moments like this where he became most confused, he didn't want to hear his baby so upset. But he felt so paralysed that he couldn't bring himself to move.

If he moved to Koa then he was leaving his safe place. The place where he went to clear his head. He was was also giving up a decent breakfast for himself. God it had been so long since he had a decent meal. But if he didn't move to help Koa he wasn't giving her the fresh milk she so desperately wanted and needed. It was like two sides of his brain were constantly battling against each other.

The selfish part that begged for his old routines back and the part that loved his daughter so much it physically hurt to breathe some days.

It was getting so bad that he was worried in the end his mind would think it was best to just switch off.

He had to snap out of this, he needed to be a dad! Be a man for Christ sake! He couldn't fuck this up. He had to prove to himself that he could do this. That autism didn't control his life.

He was his own person, he wasn't defined by his quirks.

"I-I'm coming baby, I promise." Shane croaked out, walking over towards the white bassinet. "I-I'm trying..."

He slowly reached in, shaky hands grabbing onto his daughter's tiny form. Making sure to support her head as he cuddled the now screaming baby close to his chest. His heart rate quickening as the baby mouthed hungrily at his neck. Koa needed feeding, that meant leaving the decent breakfast he had planned for another half hour .

But god, he was so looking forward to a fresh breakfast. Something different to the plain cereals he'd been stuck with for the past few months.

"Shhh Koa, it's okay. Just let me finish prepping for my breakfast first okay? Then I'll get you your milk." Shane cooed, kissing his girls head.

Anxiously making his way out of the living room, his feet felt numb. In fact his whole body felt numb... except from his arms. They felt warm... it was unexpected, but he finally felt a little bit of relief. This was a sign, a sign that he still loved his little girl, he could get through this. He just needed to open up, be strong.

"I-I've got this..." He whimpered, hands rubbing up and down Koa's back.

It was only for a few hours and then his mom would come over. His parents had been incredible, giving up their spare time to come help out whenever they could.

She had promised to be there when Ilya finally sucked it up went back to work. Today was that day. He needed his mom to help him out , needed her hold. She wouldn't leave him hanging.

"Here you go Koa, come on." He choked out, lifting his shirt to allow the baby access to his chest. Wincing as the baby did as needed, the pull painful and borderline too much to handle.

The rest of the morning dragged out in the worst way possible. Trying to prep yourself a fresh breakfast of fruit and healthy protein turned out to be a nightmare with a baby attached to you. Every time he tried to move Kia would detach and startle. Causing them to start her feed all over again. Therefore he was left with only three spoon fulls of cereal and a an apple to last him the morning.

Then to top things off Koa struggled to bring up her wind and projectile vomited all over him, he couldn't even be bothered to shower after it.

Oh and to make matters worse? His

Mom was running late so he was stuck with only himself and his thoughts once more.

It had only been four hours. FOUR since Ilya had left for practice and honestly from an outsiders point of view it probably looked as though it hadn't been too bad. He had managed to settle Koa when needed and sort out the vomit situation without any hesitation. But then all of sudden Koa had began screaming non-stop whilst Shane was trying to put the laundry away.

The new father sobbed too, holding her as close as possible. It hurt his heart way too much hearing the little sobs and hiccups. All he wanted to do was comfort his baby, yet Koa just wouldn't settle.

What was he doing wrong? What was he missing? Couldn't his baby sense his love?

Of course she couldn't! Shane was too busy trying not to loose his precious routine! The poor baby probably felt neglected every time he picked to do something for himself over cuddling her or feeding her from his chest instead of a bottle.

That thought alone was enough to have Shane sinking down onto the floor. Koa snuggled into his neck as she continued to release the most heartbreaking cries.

He needed Ilya here ... that's all he ever needed. Just Ilya. He made everything okay.

"P-please stop,I'm so sorry okay? I'm sorry you're stuck with me... I'm trying, I-I love you so much.. just p-please stop crying!" He begged sobbing hysterically into his baby's mop of hair.

"Shane!" Yuna panicked as she entered the house, gasping at the sight of her son sobbing on the floor. "Shhh it's okay, it's okay."

"N-no it's not, sh-she hates me." The younger man sobbed, watching as she placed the bags of groceries for them on the floor next to him.

"No she doesn't! Of course she doesn't ! Shane, you're her daddy!" She cooed, pulling him close to her. "This is just the depression talking, it's okay."

"'I-it's true, my brain won't stop reminding me! I keep putting my kid and my own selfish needs against each other. I'm not being fair! She d-doesn't even recognise me! I-I don't recognise me! I-I love her but I-I can't show it because I-I'm so scared I'll fuck up my relationship and my career. How selfish is that?!" Shane cried.

"Oh sweetie." Yuna whimpered, her own tears falling as she kissed Shane's head repeatedly. He was just as much her baby now as he was the day he was born. So small and inconsolable.

"I-I'm s-Sorry, I-I shouldn't have t-told you that! Fuck, I'm so, so sorry." He continued to sob out.

"It's okay, calm down sweetie." She cooed. "It's good you told me, that's the first step. Trust me I've been there my love. Remember I told you huh? How I felt those first few weeks after you were born? It's suffocating and it's hard. But you don't have to face these emotions alone. Let me help you understand baby. Let me help you."

"M' so scared mom. My brain is so loud."

"I know, I know baby. We're going to get you some help okay? It's going to be fine."

Shane nodded, hiccups wracking through his frame as he struggled to catch his breath. His lower half was screaming in pain. The barely healed stitches and soaking wet pad clinging to places he'd rather they not. God it was going to suck getting a shower after this. "I-I don't know what to do."

Yuna reached in gently to take her screaming granddaughter into her hold. Only to have Shane flinch and pull away.

"Shane, listen to me okay? Right now you need to calm down, just let me have her for a few minutes okay? Then I'm going to call Ilya, he needs to know about all of this. Don't leave him

to find you the way I just did baby, it isn't fair." She soothed in a way only a mother could.

"N-no don't take her please. I need her to stay close to me." Shane stuttered fresh tears falling as he shuffled away. "God everything hurts so bad." He added with a whimper, eyes squeezing shut.

"Okay, well if you're going to keep holding onto her then I'm going to need you to breathe. Remember how we used to before school every morning? Deep breaths yes? I'll just go and call Ilya. Tell him we're coming to watch the team practice for a bit." Yuna agreed , moving from her space and standing up to call.

"No-no! He can't know Mom , he'll leave me or worse he'll leave me and take the baby because he can't trust me to be on my own with her! You can't do that to me!"

"Ilya would never do that, Shane. Honey that man loves you more than anything. He would never abandon you when you need him most. Especially not after what happened to his mother."

"O-okay, we- we can go."

Shane knew this had to happen. But that didn't make it any easier.

"Are you sure you should be here man? I mean if Shane is as low as you're suggesting, do you really think It was wise to leave him at home alone?" Troy asked, looking at Ilya as he continued to pace the locker room.

Yuna had called him ten minutes ago to say she and Shane would be at the rink to watch their game soon.

He could hear his daughter's cries in the background and he just knew that Shane had finally cracked .

That's when he decided enough was enough. He knew his husband like he knew the back of his hand. Something was wrong . But not even he was enough for Shane to open up about how he's been feeling and it hurt. It hurt him in a way he never knew was possible.

Shane had been struggling this whole time and not once did he think to come and speak to him about it. They'd spent almost two weeks in a house together constantly . Ilya noticed the little signs and all he could do now was kick himself for not speaking up and asking Shane about it all sooner.

"Yes, I mean of course It was! He's an amazing dad ! He loves Koa more than anything. More than he loves even me."

"Ilya bud... I know he loves his daughter." Troy sighed, grabbing the Russian's arm before he could walk past him . "But if he's struggling, he won't show that to you and you know it."

"He had a ah- what is it you say? A- a slip up this morning? He spoke about how he was failing to give Koa and me the right food that is needed and then he just shut up. Said he was

exhausted and that I should go. That he loved me..." Ilya whispered the last part brokenly. "Why didn't I ask him about it? I knew something was wrong, why wouldn't I just ask? After what happened to my mother."

"Ilya, you'd never force him into anything. You know he will come to you when he's ready. Look at how much you've overcame together! Shane is the type to ignore his problems until it's too late and look will it end up hurting you both in the long run? Yes. But will you heal from it? Absolutely. Shane would never allow your relationship to fall apart, you mean too much to him." Troy stated. "If anything, the reason he didn't say anything this morning is probably because he feels guilty. Right now he has all these different emotions flowing through him . He gave birth barely two weeks ago and that alone was a traumatic experience for you all! Koa came at the most unexpected moment! He probably hasn't had chance to wrap his head around it."

"I know, I just wish he could see that I will never judge him. Never leave him."

"He does know that."

Ilya hummed , unconvinced. "Not that it helps. My mother knew I loved her, she still left me."

"Shane isn't your mom Ilya. I can't even imagine how scary all this must feel for you. Seeing him in a similar state to what she was. But you've gotta have faith, he's not going to leave you. Not now, not ever. It's going to be fine, you'll see."

"I really hope you're right."

Troy stood to pull the younger man into his hold. Ilya sniffling as he fought back the tears. If Shane did have PPD, then that was the two most important people in his life that he'd failed.

"Sounds like they're here."

At his teammates words Ilya managed to carefully list his head from his shoulder. Watching as his husband and mother in law walked into the locker room , carrying the car seat in along with them. Shane looking around anxiously as Coach Wiebe noticed him and came rushing over to take their baby girl from his hold.

"I-I should go to him." He croaked.

"Then go, let him speak to you man. Don't try and force it okay? Be patient?"

"I've got it. Thankyou." Ilya smiled softly , walking over to the huddle of his team swamping around his family, widening his smile slightly as Shane finally noticed him. "Hello you."

"Hi," Shane mumbled, soft smile shaking. Eyes red rimmed and exhausted.

It killed Ilya to see the puffiness of his eyes, how the light had completely disappeared from them and he just knew that this was it. He had to step up now, be strong for Shane, like he'd always been strong for him. He'd saved Ilya in ways he didn't even realise he had.

"Looks like Coach kidnapped baby huh?" He smirked, seeing Wiebe gush and scoop the baby up against his chest.

"I can't help it, she's just the cutest kid ever guys! You done good!" The coach continued to gush , cooing as Koa snuggled into the side of his neck. "Oh you're so precious ! So precious, yes you are!"

"Hey! What about my kids huh?" One of the other guys shouted. Ilya couldn't pin point who.

"They're amazing too, but this little one .. she was born right here in this room. It's a different kind of bond."

Shane winced at the reminder, eyes locking on the exact spot their daughter came screaming into the world. "Can we not remind me of that please Coach? Not my finest hour."

Coach Wiebe rolled his eyes playfully, moving over to pat Shane on the shoulder. "It's nice to see you up and out of the house."

"Forced myself to do it, I'm glad I did though. You guys mind giving us some space ? Me and ilya need a few minutes to talk about some stuff." Shane stated calmly. Looking at his mom gratefully as she leaned in to take Koa out of his coaches arms. She knew the anxiety Shane had letting others hold her right now. "Please?"

"Oh-right!" Coach Wiebe spoke snapping out of it, going to walk away with Yuna before Ilya stopped his mother in law gently.

"Thank-you for bringing them Yuna. I am Sorry too, but I need my baby for some cuddles." He chuckled , taking the baby from the older woman.

"That's not exactly fair! You have her at home!" Yuna pouted, though she was already moving to hand the newborn over to her father.

"Oh I is sure you'll be more than fine. I'll bring her back to you once we're done. I promise momma Hollander."

Yuna chuckled , walking away and out into the rink after Coach Wiebe. Troy not far behind her, making sure he placed a reassuring hand on Ilya's shoulder as he went past him.

"S-so is erm- is everything okay?" Ilya asked looking up at his husband. He'd never felt nervous around Shane, not until now.

Shane tried to think of some sort of excuse, to try and make this easier for them both. To help stop Ilya from worrying even more than he already was. But he couldn't. If he wanted to be a good parent to their little girl then he had to open up , there was no other way.

"No, no it's not." He whispered.

"What's wrong? What's going on sweetheart?"

At first Shane didn't reply, he only moved to open the door to the shower room and stepped inside. Ilya passing him Koa carefully before following suit. Both of them sitting in complete silence on the tiled floor as Shane began to softly cry, feeling safer now that he was completely out of sight.

"I-I can't keep doin' this." He said repeatedly rubbing Koa's back up and down. "I'm gonna mess her up Ilya and if it's not her I mess up with , it's gonna be you."

"Shane, moye solnyshko you are not going to mess up." The Russian stated sternly, leaning over to stroke over his leg. "You're the glue to this family , you're capable of more than you realise. Our little girl is so lucky to have you baby!" He pressed on. "I just- I'm so sorry I didn't notice how bad things have been getting for you until now. I should have noticed sooner."

"I-it's not your fault I can't do anything right." Shane whimpered, fresh tears falling as he watched his husband start to put the pieces together. "God I couldn't even get getting pregnant right. I had no idea the whole freaking time. It's pathetic."

"You didn't think you could get her out!Do you remember that? Y-you were in so much pain , you were scared beyond belief and look, look Shane! Y-you did it and she's here and she's absolutely perfect." Ilya told him softly. "You can do things right, you got this one and choosing to love me more than right. You're my life Hollander."

"B-because I had you." Shane sobbed. "I did it because I had you."

"Yes and you have me now, always will have me." Ilya pressed. "Shane , you have me and your family too. We're good here , I promise we won't leave you alone in this."

He carefully moved off the floor crouching down to fit between Shane's knees in order to stroke his cheek as he voiced his thoughts. "I'm not leaving you alone in this, not like I did this morning. You never have to worry about that okay? Never again."

Shane sniffled , shakily taking in a few deep breaths as he gathered himself. Looking down at his daughter who had slowly began to fall asleep , she must of sensed Shane's relief. Maybe that's what it was this whole time? She could sense how scared Shane truly was.

His baby knew all along how Shane felt and had been expressing that emotion for him, trying to help him realise.

"I-I need help." He uttered, voice cracking.

"And we will get you it... you're going to be absolutely fine." Ilya assured him.

"I- fuck, I love you." Shane breathed, eyes locking onto the younger mans, free hand stroking away one of Ilya's own tears. "M'sorry."

"I know baby." Ilya whispered, leaning over to peck his forehead. " I love you too, so , so much."

"This little girl loves you too." He quickly added, smiling softly at Koa as she cooed and wriggled. "More than anyone."

"I love her , I really , really do. God I was so scared I wouldn't be able to show her, but that's just because I let my fear of not being enough take over. Let it control my thoughts , let it scare me into believing something that wasn't true." Shane hiccuped.

"You'll always love her Shane. Just as she will always love you, trust me on that. Everyone always tells you there is no love like it. Even when you think you're done, you're never really done because your child gives you meaning , gives you strength. She is your saviour Hollander, she will save you from yourself always." His husband said calmly.

"How the hell did I get so lucky huh?"

"You introduced yourself to me like cocky shit and then let me into your room that night I knocked at nine o'clock two years later. I was done for, you had me with those beautiful freckles of yours Hollander. No take backs."

"Hollander-Rozanov."

Ilya smiled shakily, finally pressing their lips together in a much needed kiss. Both of them fighting to pour every ounce of love and fear they felt into it.

They would get through this. They had to, they had an amazing little girl to raise now. She was their priority, always.

Therapy , Shane had decided was quite possibly one of the best things in the entire universe.

He was honestly shocked at how much speaking to a complete stranger had truly helped him over the past few months. From dealing with his Autism; to coping with his PPD.

Ilya had been a god send , the second he got home from his game he immediately set up his first appointment with Galina. Stating how Shane had gone on and on about how Frank (his therapist from his years) and him didn't work so he thought it was best he go to someone Ilya could trust. Someone he knew would help.

So finally , after his emotional breakdown on the kitchen floor that day;he stopped fighting and accepted the support being offered.

Sure he still had a long way to go, but just being able to smile again was enough for him.

He was finally starting to enjoy all of the little things and had learnt so many different ways of including his old routine into his new. He actually enjoyed waking up at six in the morning and changing dirty diapers! He enjoyed letting Ilya massage his pecks just so he could feed Koa comfortably, he enjoyed sitting awake just watching his little family sleeping peacefully. He loved all of it for exactly what it was. His peace.

The little sounds and movements Koa continued to make more and more everyday were utterly adorable. And honestly he was convinced she was just getting smarter everyday. A baby genius. By the time she hit three and a half months she was already able to roll over onto her stomach. The paediatrician was beyond impressed.

Of course Shane still felt guilty for waisting her first few weeks on earth worrying and hating himself so much. But he was making up for it now.

Having his parents come and visit also helped, he couldn't count the number of times he had called them already. They'd only been on their vacation for three days and he was missing them like crazy. How he used to live away from them he'll never know. It was scary to even think about now.

"What are you smiling at?" Ilya asked in amusement , watching as his husband smiled to himself.

"M' just thinking about how grateful I am to have you. Mushy as fuck I know. But I'm gonna make the most of this feeling whilst I can." Shane chuckled.

"Well I'm glad you're making the most of your good days baby, I'm really proud of you. You really have worked so hard to push through this."

"Still not there yet, but Galina said I'm doing really well ! I mean the good days are definitely starting to finally out way the bad."

"We're so very proud, aren't we huh? We're so proud of your daddy!" Ilya cooed to Koa, who was lying awake in his arms. "You going to give me a smile? Where's my beautiful girls smile, where is it?!"

"You're such a good dad." Shane breathed, watching as Koa smiled widely and blew bubbles out of her mouth. "She’s always so damn happy."

"Wonder who she gets that from?"

Shane laughed at his husband's expression. "Both of us. We have our issues sure, but together we're always happy. Plus she has a ray of sunshine for a grandmother." He stretched lazily. "Speaking of, my mom said she will FaceTime us before dinner. Her and dad are already missing her."

"That's very true! Well if Nana is calling soon do you want to give daddy a snuggle whilst I take a nap then? Don't want to be falling asleep when we have company do I?!" Ilya gasped , placing a kiss to Koa’s nose before handing her over. He'd just gotten home an hour ago from a pretty rough training session. "You'll be okay?"

"Of course, I'll feed her and then I'll get dinner ready." The older man assured, pecking Ilya’s mouth. "Go take your nap."

"I'm on it."

Koa was an Angel, she never really fussed or made any kind of scene.

She was chill, much like Shane never really wanting to do anything other than smile, love and sit around. "Oh my baby." Shane mumbled, kissing his soft curls. "You're so precious , how are you and your papa so damn cute?"

The baby girl continued to just stare up at her father with wide blue eyes. She was a mini Ilya that was for sure. The only things she had inherited from Shane were his nose and hair colour, oh and maybe his skin tone. But other than that he was Rozanov’s twin.

"You're the image of your papa , you know that? I don't think it's very fair. I was the one who carried you, pushed you out of me..."

Koa smiled in response as though she found Shanes whining to be a source of entertainment. A small giggle escaping the four month olds lips as she squirmed and reached out to grab at the ring and gold chain dangling in front of her.

"D-did you just laugh? Baby did you just laugh?!" Shane cried in pure joy, Koa letting out another giggle in response as Shane rushed down the hall. "Ilya! Babe!"

"What?! What is happening?!" Ilya panicked, sitting up on the bed as Shane ran into the bedroom.

"Are you okay?!"

"She’s laughing! Babe she's laughing!"

"She is laughing?!"

"She’s laughing! Koko show papa!" Shane cooed, trying everything possible to get the little girl giggling once again.

"Did you do something in particular to make him laugh or?" Ilya asked in confusion after five minutes of waiting.

"Yeah! Shoot! I was erm- I was complaining about how she's your twin and how unfair it is because I was the one who carried her. I was the one who suffered for an hour to push her out of me !"

And just like that Koa was set off again, adorable little babbles and giggles escaping her mouth.

"Oh my god! I couldn't love her more if I tried." Ilya gushed, chuckling as tears gathered in his eyes at the sound of Koa’s little voice. "W-why am I crying?"

"Because she's our baby and she's growing so quickly." Shane sniffled , pressing multiple kisses to Koa’s forehead. "I don't want her to."

"Me either, I'm forever wishing she stay this tiny." The younger sighed. "How did we get so lucky? Like, she's literally perfect."

"I-I don't deserve her."

And just like that, the thoughts of not being enough and never giving his all came flooding right back. "I-I don't deserve you, not in my mind anyway. Like you and Galina and everyone else keeps telling me it's just the PPD... but I'm scared Ilya . I'm scared that I'll always depend on medication to be happy and even then it's not gonna be enough."

"Oh baby." Ilya cooed, pulling him into his side to rest his chin on top of his head. "I get it, I get how hard it is for you to switch these feelings off. I wish I could help you more, but just know I'm here okay? I'm always here for you. I've got your back."

"And I've got yours." Shane whispered.

"You are sure I'm okay to have this nap? I can stay awake if you really need me to?"

Shane knew Ilya needed his rest, but now that his mind had taken him to that dark place he knew it was best if he stuck near. "I-I'm sorry, I know you need sleep I don't-"

"I have told you, you come first Hollander. The baby and Dog next after you and then I'm third. I make sure I sleep enough when I am on planes. I'm sure I can manage without my evening power nap every once in a while. Do not be sorry for feeling the way you feel. You can't control it okay?." Ilya assured.

"I love you so much Ilya Rozanov."

"Ya lyublyu tebya yeshche bol'she.”

Shane still had a long way to go, but he wouldn’t allow himself to dwell on that.

He wanted to embrace the changes in his life, finally stand up proudly and accept that he is who he is. He is a dad now, Koa deserved to have a dad who is proud of who he is as a person.

And that’s exactly what he planned to be.

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