What Dreams Are Made Of

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What Dreams Are Made Of

by Anonymous

Summary

Ilya never would have imagined being in this situation a year ago, driving toward a nearby 24-hour diner at 2 a.m. to get Shane a milkshake of all things, even less so being so happy about it, yet here he is.

Given the time of night, the little restaurant is almost empty, and Ilya is quickly served by a lovely older lady who gives him a knowing smile when he puts in his to-go order. “Pregnant partner at home?”

“Yes,” Ilya confirms, as if the huge smile on his face hadn’t already given him away. “First middle of the night craving.”

“Well, better get you on your way quickly then.”

(or snapshots of different ways Ilya takes care of Shane during his first pregnancy.)

Notes

This is my first fic in this fandom, so please be gentle! I just could no longer resist the urge to get Shane Hollander pregnant! All mistakes are my own, no AI was used in writing this fic (fuck AI!!!)

It's only Tuesday, but for the second time this week, Ilya awakes to the sound of hurried footsteps on the hardwood floor of their bedroom, promptly followed by the sharp noise of his husband falling to his knees in their ensuite bathroom.

"Fuck," Ilya curses under his breath as he pushes the covers aside and gets out of bed.

The sight that awaits him as he steps into the bathroom makes his heart twist inside of his chest. "Oh, moya lyubov."

His poor Shane is kneeling in front of the toilet, one arm thrown over his face as he violently empties the contents of his stomach into the porcelain bowl.

Not for the first time in the past few days, Ilya kneels behind him, one of his hands coming up to rub what he hopes are soothing circles on Shane's back, the other making sure his husband's hair stays out of his sweaty face.

They stay this way for a few minutes, until Shane's stomach finally seems to settle and his whole body relaxes as he leans against the side of the bathtub next to the toilet.

Ilya takes the opportunity to stand, grabbing a washcloth from the cupboard which he runs under cold water from the sink before kneeling in front of his husband again.

"That feels nice," Shane sighs softly as Ilya gently swipes the cloth over his flushed face and neck to cool down his overheated skin. "Thank you."

"Do you think you can come back to bed?"

Ilya can tell it's still early, even by Shane's usual standards, given the way the first rays of sun are only just starting to peek through the curtains. Hopefully, Shane is able to get a few more hours of sleep before they actually have to get up for the day.

Shane seems to think about it for a moment. He looks a little pale still, but the nausea must have passed for now, because he nods after a few seconds, holding his arms out for Ilya to help him stand.

"C'mon, let's get you two back to bed," Ilya says as he hauls his husband up to his feet and guides him back to the bedroom.

This has been their new morning routine for the past week or so, ever since they found out Shane was pregnant after he almost passed out on the ice during practice.

It's still very early on, and he's been dealing with pretty bad morning sickness, which also leaves him very tired. Despite all of it, Shane insists it will all be worth it once he gets to hold their baby in a few months, though Ilya can tell it's taking a toll on him already.

There's unfortunately not much he can do to stop the nausea, but he's been doing his best to help keep Shane as comfortable as possible and make sure he has everything he needs.

“Do you want water?” Ilya asks softly, sitting on the edge of the bed after helping Shane lay down again.

His husband nods, and Ilya grabs the tumbler that lives on Shane’s bedside table and holds the straw to Shane’s mouth, satisfied when Shane takes a few careful sips before letting Ilya put the water down again.

“Come cuddle,” Shane whines and gestures for Ilya to join him. “The baby wants you.”

Ilya can’t help the fond smile that creeps up on his face as he climbs back into bed behind Shane and wraps his arms around his husband to hold him. “What baby wants, baby gets.”

Shane huffs out a short laugh as he melts into Ilya’s embrace, and Ilya can tell how tired he is after this last bout of morning sickness.

“You have to take it easy on your poor Dad,” Ilya whispers as he trails one hand down to Shane’s stomach. It’s still flat obviously, given that Shane is only about 8 weeks along currently, but Ilya cannot wait to see it swell along with their child over the next several months.

Shane’s hand joins his own over his stomach, lacing their fingers together over the place where their unborn child is growing. “I love you,” he mumbles sleepily.

“I love you too.” Ilya’s response comes automatically after all these years. “Both of you.”

It thankfully doesn’t take very long after that for Shane’s breaths to even out with sleep, his body growing lax against Ilya’s.

With the season now in full swing at the end of October, Ilya will have to leave for practice in a few hours. Shane is sitting out the rest of the season for obvious reasons, and Ilya knows he’s a little upset about it since hockey has been all he’s known for a long time now, but he has a more important job to do right now.

They’re both very excited to be growing their family, even if it did happen a little earlier than they were initially planning, and with his husband’s strength and determination, Ilya has no doubt that Shane will come back to the game next season even better than he was before once he’s had the baby.

They told the team and the public the reason for Shane’s absence was a shoulder injury for the time being. They’ll let their teammates in on their little secret in a few weeks, once Shane is a little further along and feeling better.

Ilya’s not sure how long they’ll actually be able to keep the baby a secret from everyone. He’s been told he’s got very obvious heart eyes when it comes to his husband, and Troy and Bood have both already asked what had him smiling like that recently when Shane isn’t even around.

They have managed to keep a very big secret for a very long time before though, so maybe he’s worrying over nothing.

For now, Ilya is happy to focus on holding his husband while he gets some much needed rest, thinking about what their baby will look like as he drifts back to sleep himself.

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“Ilya! Ilya, wake up!”

Ilya grunts as he opens his eyes and turns towards the voice that woke him.

Shane is in bed next to him, his head propped up on one elbow, his deep brown eyes shining in the low light of their bedroom as he looks at Ilya.

Ilya immediately worries that something is amiss. “Solnyshko, what is wrong?” he coos, one hand already freeing itself from the sheets to cup his husband’s face. “Are you okay?”

“The baby really wants a strawberry milkshake,” Shane whispers sheepishly, looking at Ilya like he just confessed to committing a heinous crime.

“A milkshake?” This is the best thing Ilya has heard all year, save for when he found out Shane was pregnant, of course.

“I know, it’s so bad,” Shane reasons with himself. “But I genuinely feel like I might cry if I don’t get one soon.”

“No, no, is okay. No need to cry, solnyshko,” Ilya is quick to reassure him, leaning closer to press a kiss to Shane’s cheek before he climbs out of the bed. “You and the baby want a milkshake, I go get you one, no problem.”

Now 15 weeks pregnant, Shane’s morning sickness has pretty much been fully gone for a few weeks now, and he’s started having cravings ever since.

They started pretty tame, with things like blueberries or peanut butter on toast, but he’s been craving sweeter things for the past week or so, which has been nothing short of delightful for Ilya.

For years he’s watched his husband deny himself of so many delicious foods due to his performance diet, and now watching him indulge in his pregnancy cravings, even when he’s craving the kind of things he would never normally allow himself to eat, makes Ilya so happy.

It’s the first time one of these cravings has manifested in the middle of the night, and though Ilya should maybe be annoyed at getting his sleep interrupted by Shane’s need for a strawberry milkshake, he finds he’s actually just very pleased about it, and more than happy to run out in the middle of the night to get whatever his husband and baby desire.

“You’re the best,” Shane says from where he’s now sitting up in bed as he watches Ilya throw on a shirt and a pair of sweats, one of his hands resting on the slight swell of his stomach.

He’s only just started to show, but Ilya is already obsessed with the little bump.

“You and the baby stay right here, all warm and cozy in bed, okay?” Ilya walks to Shane’s side of the bed to kiss him, also leaning down to press a kiss to Shane’s tummy for good measure. “I will be right back.”

It is lightly snowing when Ilya reverses the car from the garage onto the dark quiet street of their neighbourhood, winter slowly but surely setting in in Ottawa.

He never would have imagined being in this situation a year ago, driving toward a nearby 24-hour diner at 2 a.m. to get Shane a milkshake of all things, even less so being so happy about it, yet here he is.

Given the time of night, the little restaurant is almost empty, and Ilya is quickly served by a lovely older lady who gives him a knowing smile when he puts in his to-go order. “Pregnant partner at home?”

“Yes,” Ilya confirms, as if the huge smile on his face hadn’t already given him away. “First middle of the night craving.”

“Well, better get you on your way quickly then,” she says warmly as she goes to prepare the drink.

Within minutes, Ilya is thanking the lady by leaving a rather large tip in the jar on the counter and slipping back out into the cold, Shane’s milkshake in hand.

He makes it back home in almost no time, thanks to the mostly empty streets, and wastes no time making his way back upstairs to Shane.

The sight he’s greeted by when he steps into their bedroom makes Ilya’s heart melt.

The bedside lamp on Shane’s side of the bed has been turned on, making his husband’s skin look all golden, and he is sitting propped up against a few pillows, the hockey biography he’s been reading for the past few days open in his hands with his glasses perched on the bridge of his nose.

He looks up when he hears Ilya enter the room, and his whole face lights up when he spots the paper cup he’s holding.

“Oh my God, I love you so much!” Shane says, making grabby hands for the milkshake.

Ilya laughs as he makes his way to Shane’s side of the bed and hands it over to him. Shane immediately takes a large sip, letting out a low moan as the taste floods his mouth.

“I don’t know if you are more happy to see me or the milkshake.” Ilya can’t help but laugh again at his reaction, which earns him a small slap on the chest from his husband.

“Stop it!” Shane narrows his eyes at him. “It’s your fault I’m even craving this in the first place!”

“Sorry, sorry!” Ilya says, throwing his hands up. “I’m just happy you’re enjoying it, that is all.”

Shane smiles sheepishly at him, taking another sip of his milkshake. “Thank you, it’s exactly what the baby wanted.”

“Good.” Ilya smiles fondly at him as he takes off his clothes again and joins Shane on the bed.

He lays down so he’s eye level with Shane’s tummy, placing one hand on the slight swell and looking at it lovingly. “You are already such a smart baby, craving all of the most delicious things,” he says to the bump.

Shane huffs, shaking his head at Ilya in between sips of his milkshake. “They’re definitely your kid with the things they’ve been making me crave lately. I can’t even remember the last time I had a milkshake.”

“You are lucky you have my genes then,” Ilya keeps speaking to the baby. “Otherwise your Dad would only make you eat gross things like green smoothies and bland chicken. Yuck. ”

“Hey, my smoothies are healthy and full of nutrients.” Shane defends, though there's no heat behind his words, his hand joining Ilya’s on his tummy.

“I know, solnyshko.” Ilya looks up at Shane, smiling at the fond expression that greets him. “But you are pregnant now, you are allowed to relax a little bit and indulge.”

Shane’s face flushes at Ilya’s words, and he gestures to the milkshake in his hand. “I am.”

“And I will make sure that you keep doing it,” Ilya says, sitting up in bed next to Shane. “No matter what time it is when the baby decides they want their next milkshake.”

“Sorry, I’ll tell them to be more timely next time,” Shane apologises with a fond smile.

“Is okay.” Ilya shakes his head before closing the distance between them to kiss Shane. His lips taste sweet from the milkshake, and Ilya smiles at the thought as he pulls away. “I don’t mind, as long as you and the baby are happy.”

—

It’s already past 11 p.m. when Ilya makes it back to the hotel from the arena. The team just played the third of four away games in a row, this one against Chicago, which they ended up losing in overtime.

He hopes he hasn't missed his chance to call Shane to say goodnight, but the slight time difference means it's already past midnight back home in Ottawa, and Shane has been struggling to stay up past 10 p.m. most days lately.

He's well into his second trimester, now 22 weeks along, and it has brought along a few new symptoms, the most significant of which has been fatigue. His body is working hard to grow their daughter, and he's definitely feeling the toll of it.

Their daughter.

The thought alone is enough to make him smile. They'd found out the gender together at Shane's 20 week appointment. Neither of them actually minded the gender of the baby, only hoping for a healthy baby, but they'd decided to find out either way.

Ilya thinks he will always remember the way his heart nearly exploded with love when the doctor announced they were expecting a baby girl. They both left that appointment with tear-filled eyes and spent the rest of the day daydreaming out loud together about who their daughter will look like the most (Ilya really hopes she will look like Shane), what her little personality will be like, and how much they are going to love and adore her.

Being away from Shane has always been difficult for Ilya, but it is even harder now that he's pregnant. He hates having to leave him all by himself in his state, but at least he has Yuna and David close by should he need anything.

Grabbing his phone, he decides to send Shane a quick text, just in case he is in fact awake.

He's surprised when he gets a FaceTime request from Shane not even a minute later, and he sits down on the edge of the bed and answers it as fast as he can.

Shane looks tired when his face fills the screen of Ilya's phone. He's sitting in the living room downstairs, wearing one of Ilya's old Boston Raiders t-shirts. "Ilya! Hi!" He says, stifling a yawn.

Ilya frowns at his phone. "Moya lyubov, what is wrong? You look tired, why aren't you in bed, sleeping?"

"It's nice to see you too." Shane rolls his eyes.

"No, no, Shane. Of course it is nice seeing you! It is why I texted you, so I could see your pretty face," Ilya says quickly. "I just wasn't expecting you to be awake, solnyshko. You have been so tired lately."

"I know, I'm sorry," Shane says, and Ilya can see his eyes start to fill with tears through the screen. "I shouldn't have said that."

"Shane, is everything okay?" Ilya asks, getting increasingly more worried seeing his husband in such a state and not being able to do anything about it from so far away. "You are worrying me."

“I’m okay,” Shane says with a sniffle. “Sorry, I’m just tired and hormonal and the baby’s been kicking almost non-stop today, and I really miss you.”

“Oh Shane,” Ilya says softly, really wishing he could hold his husband rather than be here trying to console him from hundreds of miles away. “I miss you too, so much.”

“I was sleeping, but then she started kicking me in the ribs and it woke me up,” Shane explains, looking down at his belly with a fond expression. “I think she misses you too, you know. She’s been kicking so much more the past few days.”

Ilya swallows thickly, trying to stifle his emotions at that statement before he starts tearing up too. “Maybe she is training to play soccer one day.”

“Maybe,” Shane muses, rubbing one hand down over his bump, which seems to be getting bigger each and every day now that he’s over halfway through the pregnancy. “Or maybe she’ll play hockey like her dads.”

“She would be the best, probably,” Ilya says proudly. “It’s in her genes.”

Shane shifts positions on the screen with a yawn, making himself more comfortable on the sofa. “How was the game? Did you guys win? Sorry I only managed to stay up for the first period.”

“We lost in overtime,” Ilya says with a sigh.

Though the Centaurs managed to make the playoffs consistently for the past few years, even winning the Cup just two years ago, they’ve struggled a little bit this season.

Between Shane being out due to the pregnancy, Bood needing surgery for a recurring knee injury, and Wyatt having to sit out a few games for a shoulder injury, they’ve had a hard time winning games the way they used to be able to.

With all due respect, a team as mediocre as Chicago should have been easy for them to beat, but here they are, nearing the end of their road trip with only one win out of three games. Given the fourth is against last year’s Cup champions, Carolina, Ilya would be surprised to see their total wins climb to two before heading back home.

If he’s being totally realistic, unless they somehow manage to pull it together to clinch a wildcard spot, Ilya would also be very surprised if the team made the playoffs at all at this point.

And even though Ilya is very competitive and wants nothing more than to see his team succeed, he has to admit he’s not that disappointed about it this year. They did their best with what they had, and there’s always next year. The fact that Ilya will most likely be home for the summer by the time Shane is due in early June is also an added bonus.

Ilya can tell by the look on Shane’s face that he is partly blaming himself for all of this. It’s been hard for him having to sit out this season, especially since the team has been losing so often.

“I did score two goals though,” Ilya says, hoping to cheer his husband up a little bit. “One for you, and one for malyshka.”

That does put a smile on Shane’s face. “That’s so sweet,” he says, then yawns again.

“Why don’t you go up to bed, moya lyubov?” Ilya suggests gently. “We can fall asleep together.”

“You’ll stay on the phone?” Shane asks, already getting up off the couch to head back to bed. Ilya can hear the sound of Anya’s paws following behind him. She has been glued to Shane’s side the whole pregnancy, and Ilya is glad she is there to keep Shane company when he is away.

“For as long as you want.” Ilya promises as he lays down in bed himself, watching as Shane makes his way to their bedroom and makes himself cozy in bed, setting his phone down by his pillow so it feels like Ilya is right beside him.

“Tell me about the game,” Shane requests even though he’s already struggling to keep his eyes open.

And so Ilya does, though he only gets to tell him about the two goals he scored for them as well as Luca’s beautiful pass before the sound of Shane’s light snoring reaches his ears.

He’s been snoring ever since the start of the second trimester, another new symptom that Ilya finds extremely endearing.

Wrapping the sheets tighter around himself, Ilya can’t help but smile softly as he watches Shane sleep on his phone. “Good night, moya lyubov. Rest well.”

—

“Shane! We’re back!” Ilya announces as he steps back into the house after taking Anya on her morning walk.

It’s the end of March, and the Centaurs have a rare day off, which Ilya is pretty happy about considering he gets to spend it with Shane.

He crouches to wipe down Anya’s slightly wet paws from the melting snow outside before unclipping her leash, laughing under his breath when she immediately goes in search of Shane.

Ever since finding out that he was expecting, Anya has become obsessed with Shane, always close by to keep an eye on him, and often resting her head on his belly when he’s laying on the couch.

She's become even clingier the farther along he gets, so, now that Shane has just entered his thirtieth week, Ilya is not surprised to see her take off to get to him so fast.

He follows her to the living room, also eager to check on Shane even though he's only been gone for about half an hour.

He finds him on the floor, sitting on a yoga mat, taking deep breaths with his eyes closed. Ilya can see he's got his earbuds in, and he's wearing a pair of black shorts and one of Ilya's oversized t-shirts. It's one of the only things that fit over his large bump anymore, but Ilya has always loved seeing Shane wearing his clothes anyways, so he is more than happy to share his closet with him if it means his husband can be comfortable.

Not wanting to spook him, Ilya gently lays a hand on Shane's shoulder, pulling his focus away from his breathing as he opens his eyes and looks up at Ilya.

"Hey," Shane says as he takes his earbuds out.

"What are you doing?" Ilya asks.

Shane gestures to his belly and frowns. "Just trying to make room for your huge Russian baby."

Ilya's brows furrow at his husband's words, but he knows Shane is right – their daughter is big. The doctor had even said she was in the 90th percentile for size at their last appointment, to Shane's absolute horror.

"Is your back bothering you again?" Ilya asks as he lowers himself down to the floor to sit behind Shane.

"Yeah, and my hips," Shane says as he shifts uncomfortably on the mat. "She's starting to be heavy, Ilya."

"I know, moya lyubov, I am sorry," Ilya mumbles against Shane's shoulder as he wraps his arms around him from behind.

Shane immediately leans back against Ilya's chest, letting out a content sigh. If there's one surefire way to make him feel better, it's by having Ilya close by.

They stay like this on the floor for a bit, their hands moving across the surface of Shane's taught belly as they chase their daughter's movements underneath his shirt.

"Can I try something?" Ilya asks after a while, pressing a gentle kiss where Shane's shoulder meets his neck. "To help with the pain?"

"Sure." Shane agrees easily. "I think I'd try just about anything at this point."

Ilya gives him a sympathetic smile as he stands and then helps Shane to his feet as well.

"Come here," Ilya says as he positions himself behind Shane again and places both hands underneath his bump. "Ready?"

“What? Ready for wh–” Shane starts, then cuts himself off when Ilya gently raises his belly up into his hands and the weight instantly lifts from his hips and lower back. “Oh.”

Ilya smiles, pressing a kiss to Shane’s cheek. “Is it helping?”

Shane lets his head fall back against Ilya’s shoulder, his whole body relaxing against his husband. “Fuck, that feels so good, Ilya. Where did you even learn this?”

“Harris showed me on TikTok.”

“We should send Harris some flowers.”

Ilya laughs. “Noted.”

Shane leans even more of his weight against him, clearly enjoying this, and Ilya quietly widens his stance to better support him, happy to be able to provide his husband with a little bit of relief.

“Do you have to put it back down?” Shane asks, looking up at Ilya with his big brown eyes that could make Ilya do just about anything for him.

“I mean, eventually, probably,” Ilya says, kissing Shane again, on the lips this time. “But I can hold it for a little while. You deserve a break.”

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“Bath is ready, moya lyubov,” Ilya announces, poking his head into the doorway to their bedroom to look at Shane, who’s lying on his side in bed, one hand absentmindedly rubbing circles over the tight skin of his tummy.

Now 36 weeks pregnant, Shane’s bump has gotten pretty large, especially given how big their daughter is measuring. She’s a heavy girl, and the weight has been doing a number on his back and hips as the weeks advance.

Ilya has been doing everything he can to help alleviate Shane’s pain, hating seeing his husband so uncomfortable. He’s become an expert at giving back rubs, has researched new yoga moves for Shane to try that are meant to help open up his hips and pelvis, and only mildly complains about Shane now preferring to snuggle with the pregnancy pillow Ilya got him a few weeks ago rather than with him. It takes up a significant portion of their bed, and Ilya does miss waking up with his husband plastered to his side, but the pillow provides Shane so much relief and helps him sleep more comfortably, so Ilya still counts it as a win in the end.

He’s also been running Shane baths regularly, as soaking in warm water has also proven to be very helpful for his aching back.

“Help me up?” Shane requests, brows furrowed as he unsuccessfully tries to roll out of bed by himself.

“Of course.” Ilya is quick to come to his aid, wrapping one arm around Shane’s torso to help him sit up, then grabbing both of his hands to haul him up to his feet.

Shane grunts as soon as he is upright again, the weight of the baby settling on his hips and pelvis again. “Fuck, you’re lucky I love you, Rozanov,” he huffs as he lets Ilya guide him towards the bathroom. “Because you and your damn Russian genes are the reason I can’t even stand by myself now.”

“Yes, I know, moya lyubov, I am sorry.” Ilya clearly remembers Yuna telling him that Shane was also a very large baby, as well as seeing photo evidence of a very adorable newborn Shane with impressively chubby cheeks, but he also values his life and does not want his daughter to grow up with only one parent, so he decides not to remind his very pregnant husband of that information. “Bath should help though, yes?”

Shane nods as he waddles to their ensuite bathroom, Ilya following close behind.

When he crosses the threshold, he takes in the state of the bathroom and looks back at Ilya with tears in his eyes.

“What is wrong solnyshko?” Ilya asks immediately. “Are you hurting?”

“No, nothing’s wrong.” Shane sniffs. “You just made it so nice for me!”

Ilya noticed Shane was feeling very overwhelmed with everything today, and so Ilya decided to go the extra mile to try to help him feel better. Hoping to create a nice calm and relaxing ambiance for his husband, he dimmed the lights in their bathroom and lit a few candles, bathing the space in a soft amber glow, and he added Shane’s favourite lavender oil to the water, making the room smell nice and fragrant.

“You’re so good to me,” Shane says with a wet huff.

“Oh Shane.” Ilya suppresses a laugh as he gathers his very hormonal husband into his arms and lets him lean his weight onto him.

“This is so nice,” Shane says into the fabric of Ilya’s shirt where he’s pressed his face. “Thank you.”

“Is nothing. You are doing all of the hard work carrying our daughter, yes?” Ilya says. “The least I can do is make sure you are taken care of too.”

That earns him a smile from Shane, and Ilya kisses his forehead before breaking their embrace to help Shane undress and step into the bathtub.

The sigh of relief he lets out as soon as he’s submerged in the water puts a soft smile on Ilya’s face. “Good?”

“Really good, my back feels so much better already,” Shane says, closing his eyes as he leans back in the water, both of his hands resting on his bump. “She’s getting really heavy.”

“I know solnyshko.” Ilya kneels next to the bathtub, folding his arms over the ledge and resting his head on them so he can admire his husband. “But she is almost fully cooked now, just a few more weeks.”

That has Shane laughing slightly, and he cracks one eye open to look at Ilya. “I can’t wait to see you with her. You’re going to be such a great Papa.”

Ilya swallows back the tears threatening to fall from his husband’s words and the softness with which he’s looking at him.

“Thank you for taking such great care of us,” Shane adds before taking hold of Ilya’s hand and pressing it to the top of his bump, where Ilya can immediately feel their daughter’s foot pressing up against his hand.

“Hello malyshka,” he says to the bump. “Are you enjoying the water too?”

Their daughter gives another kick against his palm, making Ilya smile. He loves getting to feel her move inside of Shane’s belly.

“Keep talking,” Shane says softly, closing his eyes again as he relaxes further in the water. “She knows the sound of your voice.”

That is how they spend the next half hour, with Shane letting his sore body soak in the warm water, listening to Ilya speak to their unborn daughter with such reverence.

He tells her about how excited he is to meet her, about the pretty purple colour they chose to paint the walls in her nursery, about her older sister Anya and how they’re going to be best friends one day, about the cottage and how much she’s going to love spending her summers there with them.

And through it all, she keeps moving under his hand, sometimes making Shane groan when she delivers a slightly harder kick, in turn making Ilya give him a sympathetic smile.

“She is starting to run out of room in there,” Ilya says as he looks up at Shane after another particularly harsh movement from her.

“You don’t need to tell me,” Shane says with furrowed brows as his hand rubs circles on the expanse of his stomach in an attempt to soothe their restless daughter. “She’s getting too big to move around like this now.”

“It’s because you have made such a lovely home for her, moya lyubov.” Ilya lifts his hand up to Shane's face, tucking a stray piece of hair behind his ear before gently running his thumb over the freckles on Shane’s cheek.

Shane huffs out a laugh. “Maybe she could show her appreciation by being a bit more gentle,” he says in an exasperated tone, though the look on his face tells Ilya he still feels

nothing but love for their rambunctious daughter. “The kicks to my ribs and bladder every half hour are starting to get old now. Speaking of, help me out please? I need to pee.”

Ilya laughs under his breath as he helps Shane out of the bath, wrapping him in a fluffy towel and making sure he’s not going to slip before allowing him to go relieve himself.

He’s clearing out the bathtub and putting out the candles when he feels Shane wrap him in a hug from behind a few minutes later.

The angle is a little bit awkward with his belly in the way, but Ilya still smiles as he holds onto his arms over his chest. “Feeling better?

“Much,” Shane mumbles, his face pressed into Ilya’s neck. “Thank you.”

“Anytime, solnyshko.”

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“Mmmmh, ow, fuck.”

Ilya looks up from where he’s peeling a banana to add it to the blender to look at Shane, who is sitting on one of the barstools lining the kitchen island wearing a pained expression.

“Contraction?” Ilya asks softly as he puts the fruit down to make his way to Shane.

Shane can only nod in response, focusing on breathing through the pain as Ilya reaches him, quickly grabbing his phone from his pocket to time the contraction and rubbing Shane’s lower back the way he’s been asking him to.

He started having proper contractions the night before, but while they were still easy to manage and fairly far apart then, even allowing him to get a few hours of decent sleep overnight, they’re coming a lot more regularly this morning and seem to demand a lot more of Shane already.

He’s five days overdue, so it’s not like he wasn’t expecting this to happen any day, but Ilya is still a little nervous about the whole home birth thing.

They’re at the cottage, Shane’s favourite place on Earth, where he was adamant he wanted to bring their daughter into the world.

They had of course found a lovely midwife, Deanna, to aid with the delivery, who would be coming by later once the contractions were closer together, and while Ilya trusts her to keep Shane and their baby safe, he still can’t help the nagging bit of worry at the back of his mind.

Shane is about to go through the hardest thing he will probably ever do, and there is only so much Ilya can do to help him.

It’s about 45 seconds before Shane exhales deeply, his body relaxing as he looks up at Ilya. “They’re starting to really hurt now.”

“I know, solnyshko.” Ilya sits on the stool next to Shane and wraps his arm around his shoulders until his husband leans into him with a content sigh. “You are doing so good, though.”

“I hope she doesn’t make me wait too long,” Shane says as he rubs one hand down his swollen tummy. “She already made us wait an extra five days past her due date.”

“I hope so too, moya lyubov,” Ilya agrees, pressing a tender kiss to Shane’s temple.

He really hopes Shane’s labor will be quick and easy. He’s been having regular contractions for the past five hours now, and Ilya’s heart is already breaking seeing his husband in so much pain.

“Let’s get you two fed now, yes?” Ilya offers Shane a smile as he stands again and makes it back to the other side of the kitchen island where he was previously making Shane a smoothie.

His husband said he wasn’t really all that hungry, the waves of pain replacing his usual morning appetite with a low level queasiness, but Ilya was adamant Shane would need his strength later on, so they compromised on a strawberry and banana smoothie, Shane's favourite during his pregnancy.

Ilya kinda hopes he will keep drinking these even after he gives birth, rather than go back to his gross green protein smoothies, but he keeps that thought to himself as he finishes putting the ingredients in the blender.

A few minutes later, he’s sitting next to Shane again, handing him the smoothie and running his fingers through the dark hair at the back of Shane’s neck. It’s thicker and longer now, thanks to the pregnancy hormones, and Ilya can’t help but think about how good Shane looks like this.

He is going to miss seeing the bump grow week after week, but he is also very excited to get to meet their daughter very soon.

Shane instantly melts under his touch, bringing the straw to his lips and taking a sip of the pink smoothie before closing his eyes with a satisfied smile. Ilya is glad the drink seems to be providing him a bit of comfort, rather than making him feel worse than he already is.

Time stretches slowly as they sit side by side in the kitchen, enjoying the rays of sun streaming through the large windows of the cottage. Today is a beautiful day for their daughter to be born, Ilya thinks.

Shane is bringing the straw to his lips again when his arm pauses midway, putting the glass back down on the counter as his whole body tenses. “Shit.”

Ilya is quick to stand so he can put his hands on Shane's back again, kissing his shoulder as Shane presses both hands flat on the counter and lets his head hang between his shoulders.

"Just breathe through it, moya lyubov," Ilya says softly. "It is almost through."

A few more seconds pass before Shane relaxes again, exhaling hard as he slumps back into Ilya's chest, who supports him easily.

"They're about ten minutes apart now," Ilya informs Shane after tracking the latest contraction on his phone.

"They're getting closer together," Shane says, shifting uncomfortably on the barstool.

Ilya hums in agreement. "Should we call Deanna?"

"Not yet," Shane says. "It's still early. Let's wait until they're a bit closer."

He makes a move to stand from the stool, and Ilya offers him a hand which he accepts with a grateful smile. One of his hands makes his way to his lower back as soon as his feet make contact with the floor, the other supporting the weight of his belly.

Their daughter is sitting really low in Shane's pelvis, making it a little awkward to move around at the moment, though he insists walking has been helping with the pain of the contractions.

Shane looks over Ilya's shoulder at the yard behind the cottage, catching a glimpse of the lake shimmering under the bright sunlight. "Can we walk outside for a little bit? It's such a nice day."

"Of course, solnyshko."

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"You are doing so good, moya lyubov," Ilya whispers as he lets Shane squeeze the literal life out of his right hand. "So beautiful."

"Mmmmh, shut up," Shane moans from where he's sitting on a yoga ball in the living room, swivelling his hips in slow circles and leaning his upper body against Ilya as he works through another contraction.

"You are, though." Ilya doesn't let Shane deter him from reminding his husband how good he's doing. "You are gorgeous, solnyshko."

Shane moans again as the contraction peaks, somehow squeezing Ilya's hand even harder as he breathes through the pain until finally, after almost a full minute has passed, his shoulders

drop and he exhales tiredly. “I’m all red and sweaty from trying to give birth to your huge daughter, Ilya. I am the farthest thing from gorgeous right now.”

“Ah, but you are very wrong, moya lyubov,” Ilya tuts, cupping Shane’s face with his hand and letting his thumb caress the smattering of freckles under Shane’s eye. “You are bringing our baby into the world. You have never looked more beautiful to me than you do right now.”

It is now the afternoon, and they moved to the living room when Shane grew tired after walking around for a while outside. He’s been alternating between pacing around the room, sitting on his yoga ball and sometimes laying on his side on the couch. Ilya has not left his side for more than a few seconds through it all.

Shane’s contractions are now five minutes apart and have been for almost an hour, and Ilya can tell his strength is starting to wane now after so many hours of labor.

The midwife is on the way to check on him, Ilya having called her a little while ago when Shane declared he thought it was time for her to make her way over, and Ilya is hoping she will have good news for Shane when she arrives.

“Can I have my water, please?” Shane asks, letting go of Ilya’s hand to place it on his bump, where Ilya assumes their daughter is kicking him again. She has been pretty active the past few hours, voicing her discontent at being kicked out of the cozy home she’s been occupying for the past 9 months.

“Of course.” Ilya quickly retrieves Shane’s tumbler from the coffee table and hands it over to him, smiling when Shane immediately takes a few sips.

“I’m so tired,” Shane says as he hands the water back to Ilya. “This really hurts, Ilya.”

Ilya frowns as he moves to kneel in front of Shane again, taking hold of both of his husband’s hands and pressing their foreheads together. “I know, solnyshko, but you are strong, da? You are doing amazing.”

Shane opens his mouth to answer, but whatever words he was about to say are cut off by a groan as his womb contracts again. “Fuck, why did I let you do this to me again?”

Ilya knows better than to answer that question right now, instead focusing on helping Shane through the pain, whispering sweet nothings in his ear and letting him squeeze his hands as hard as he needs to until he finally relaxes again. His brown eyes are wet with unshed tears when he lifts his head to meet Ilya’s gaze again, and Ilya feels his heart break into a thousand little pieces at the sight of his husband.

“Can I try the birthing pool when Deanna gets here?” Shane asks tiredly.

The birthing pool their midwife had suggested they get for Shane to labor in is set up in one of the guest bedrooms, just waiting to be filled. Ilya hopes the water will be able to provide Shane with a little relief once he does get in.

“Of course. She should be here any minute now,” Ilya assures him. “I will ask her to help set it up as soon as she arrives, okay?”

“Okay,” Shane answers and presses their foreheads together again, as if he is drawing his strength from being close to Ilya. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Ilya gives Shane’s hands a reassuring squeeze as they wait for the next wave of pain to take over.

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“I can’t do this Ilya,” Shane cries out as he holds onto Ilya’s shirt like his life depends on it.

He’s kneeling in the water, face to face with Ilya who is kneeling in front of him just outside of the birthing pool, holding him and talking him through the contractions.

He’s made good progress in the last few hours since Deanna has arrived. His water broke as they were making their way to the guest bedroom from the living room earlier, and his contractions have been stronger and closer together ever since. A recent cervical check revealed he was now 7 centimeters dilated and well into transition now.

“Yes you can, moya lyubov,” Ilya says softly, using his thumb to wipe away a few tears that are falling on Shane’s cheeks. “You are doing so good, bringing her closer with every contraction.”

“You don’t understand!” Shane moans as another contraction starts and his grip on Ilya tightens. “I can’t do this anymore, you need to get her out right now!”

“You can do it Shane, you are already doing it,” Deanna says in a gentle but firm voice from where she’s standing by the side of the pool. “Your body knows exactly what it’s doing, Shane. You’re almost there.”

Shane just shakes his head, unable to speak any longer as the contractions crests before slowly releasing its hold on him. “Ilya.”

“I’m right here, solnyshko,” Ilya says, pressing a quick kiss to Shane’s sweaty hair.

“Ilya, please,” Shane whines, and the way he’s looking at him has Ilya wanting to start crying right with him. “I’m so tired.”

It’s well into the evening now, and Shane has been at this for so many hours already, Ilya can only imagine how exhausted he must feel. His contractions are relentless too, allowing him barely any rest between when one contraction ends and the next one begins. Deanna says it’s a good sign that things are moving along and that their daughter should be making her big entrance sooner rather than later, and Ilya really hopes she is right for Shane’s sake.

His husband is the strongest, most determined person he has ever met, and it's almost scary to see him so tired and discouraged at his slow progress.

"I know you are," Ilya whispers. "But you are so close now, Shane. Our daughter needs you to do this just a little longer, okay?"

"Okay." His words finally seem to reach Shane, and he takes a deep steadying breath before nodding at Ilya. "Okay, I can do this."

"You are doing so good, moya lyubov," Ilya can't help the sense of pride filling his chest. "You are being so brave."

"Mmmmh, Ilya," Shane whines as another contraction starts, reaching out for Ilya's hand.

"I am right here, Shane," Ilya whispers as he kisses him on the forehead. "I am not going anywhere."

—

The vibe in the entire cottage shifts a few hours later. It's night again and they're in their bedroom now, the space lit up with only the soft glow of their bedside table. Shane is on all fours at the centre of the bed, Ilya supporting his upper body and offering words of encouragement as Deanna guides him to push from the foot of the bed.

"Good Shane, take a moment to breathe now," Deanna instructs him. "Keep pushing like that and she'll be here in no time."

"Ilya," Shane says, his voice barely above a whisper as he tries to catch his breath between contractions.

"I'm right here, moya lyubov," Ilya assures him, pushing Shane's sweaty hair away from his forehead. "She's almost here Shane, just a little more."

The only indication that Shane is hearing him right now comes in the form of a tiny nod before he tenses up against Ilya.

"Okay Shane, give me another big push," Deanna says, and Shane lets out a deep moan as he puts all of his focus into the push. "Good, I'm starting to see her head, Shane. She's probably going to start crowning on the next push."

"You hear that Shane?" Ilya says, a mix of excitement and nervousness in his voice. "You're doing it, solnyshko."

Another contraction starts before Shane can acknowledge his words, and he groans again as he gives another strong push. Ilya can only watch and hold him as Shane keeps pushing, laser focused towards the end goal of meeting their daughter now that he's nearly at the end.

“Alright Shane, I need you to pant and let her head come through without pushing on the next one,” Deanna says once Shane relaxes a bit after the contraction ends. “Her head is crowning and I don’t want you to tear now, okay?”

“Okay,” Shane agrees, pressing his face into Ilya’s shoulder as he works against his body’s instincts to push. “Fuck, this burns.”

“That’s her head slowly coming out, just keep panting, you’re doing great Shane,” Deanna says. “She’s got nice thick black hair.”

“Oh, Shane.” Ilya is so happy to hear their daughter seems to be taking after Shane. “She’s got your hair, solnyshko.”

Shane huffs out a tired laugh in response, only seconds before he screams in pain as her head finally emerges.

“Head’s out!” Deanna announces. “I need a big push for her shoulders now, Shane. She’s almost here!”

Shane takes a deep breath, steeling himself for the next contraction, and Ilya watches in awe as he pushes with everything he’s got, groaning with the effort.

Ilya waits for Deanna to announce that their daughter is here, but she doesn’t, and Shane tears up again as he looks at Ilya, utterly defeated at the fact that their daughter barely moved with that last push.

“I can’t do it,” he cries.

“Yes you can,” Ilya argues. “You are almost done, solnyshko, I promise.”

“She’s too big, Ilya.” Shane shakes his head. “I can’t push her out.”

“Shane, listen to me,” Ilya says, making sure Shane is looking at him before he continues. “You are Shane Hollander! You are the strongest person I know! Best player in the whole league! Four time Cup champion! You can do this, moya lyubov! Our daughter needs you to do this for her. Just one more push, Shane, and then she’ll be here and you will be able to hold her and it will all be over, okay?”

“Okay,” Shane says, holding onto Ilya’s arm with an iron grip as Deanna instructs him to push and he gathers all of the strength he has left and pushes with a scream that Ilya thinks he will remember for the rest of his life.

“And she’s here!” Deanna announces just seconds later, now holding their daughter between Shane’s legs.

She only needs to rub the baby’s back for a few seconds before the room is filled with her strong cries, and Ilya can’t help the tears also coming down his face as he carefully helps Shane onto his back so the baby can be placed on his chest.

“You did it, moya lyubov,” Ilya says wetly as he looks down at their daughter. She’s got a full head of black hair just like Shane, and her pink little face is all scrunched up as she gets used to her new surroundings, but Ilya can already recognise the shape of his own mouth on her. “Oh Shane, she’s so beautiful!”

“She’s here,” Shane says in disbelief as he looks up at Ilya with a tired smile before looking down at their daughter and pressing a kiss to the top of her head to try to comfort her. “It’s okay, Daddy’s got you, you’re okay.”

“You are incredible, moya lyubov.” Ilya feels like his chest is going to explode from all of the love he’s feeling for his husband and daughter right now. He truly thought it was impossible for him to love Shane any more than he already did, but watching him bring their daughter into the world has brought him a whole new sense of appreciation for him. “Fuck, I love you so much.”

Shane looks up at him again, and he looks so good like this, with their daughter laying on his chest, her cries slowly quieting down now that she’s being held by her Daddy. Ilya brings one hand to rest on her little back next to Shane’s and leans closer to kiss his husband, hoping the gesture can convey all the adoration he feels for Shane right now.

Both of their gazes immediately go back to their daughter once they pull away, and Ilya admires her as he holds Shane, convinced he must be the luckiest man on Earth for getting to call both of them his.

—

The first few hours of their daughter’s life pass by in a blur, and before they know it, Shane and Ilya are alone in their cottage again, save for the addition of the tiny bundle currently curled up in the crook of Ilya’s elbow.

Deanna just left after packing up all of her things and promising to check back on them later, and Shane’s parents will be by later to meet their brand new grandbaby, but for now, it’s just the three of them here for the very first time.

The sun is starting to rise outside, but they are in bed again, one of Ilya’s arms wrapped around Shane as he rests against his side and the other holding onto the most precious thing Ilya has ever seen.

She’s been cleaned up and is now wrapped in a tiny pink blanket, sleeping peacefully after her very first feeding.

“I can’t believe Deanna said she’s the biggest baby she’s ever helped deliver,” Shane says with a soft laugh as he looks down at the baby.

Because while she may look tiny in Shane and Ilya's strong arms, their daughter is definitely big. Weighing in at an impressive 10 pounds and 10 ounces, Ilya thinks it's no wonder Shane was in so much pain in the last weeks of his pregnancy.

"I can believe it," Ilya says with a little smirk. "You've never been one to do things halfway."

Shane laughs at that, then winces as he shifts a little against Ilya to try to find a comfortable position.

"Are you okay?" Ilya asks, frowning at his husband's discomfort.

"I'm okay," Shane assures him as he settles and leans some more of his weight against Ilya's chest. "Just a little sore."

"You should get some rest," Ilya says as he kisses the top of Shane's head. "You've definitely earned it after what you've done today."

Shane flushes under his husband's praise, and he stifles a yawn as he looks at their daughter. "I will after we choose a name for her."

Ilya takes a moment to look down at her. She looks like a perfect mixture of the both of them, with Shane's hair and eyes and Ilya's nose and mouth. She doesn't appear to have freckles for now, but Ilya is still holding out hope that she will develop some as she grows up.

"I still like both of the names we picked out," Ilya says, referring to the last two names that made it on their short list when they decided to wait for her to be born to make their final selection. "You should pick, moya lyubov, since you're the one that did all of the hard work."

Shane smiles as he looks at her again, reaching one hand over to stroke her chubby little cheek. "I think she looks like a Mila."

"It definitely suits her," Ilya agrees. "Our little Mila. What do you think, malyshka? You like it?"

Mila chooses that moment to let out an adorable little yawn, burrowing herself closer to her Papa.

"I think she likes it," Shane says fondly, unable to tear his eyes away from her. "Mila Irina Hollander-Rozanov."

Ilya smiles softly at the reminder of the middle name they chose to give her in honour of his mother. "It's beautiful, just like her."

Shane yawns again next to him. "I'm so tired, but I don't want to stop looking at her."

Ilya huffs out a laugh, though he can't say he doesn't understand the sentiment. He would spend the rest of his life staring at her if he could. "You should sleep, moya lyubov. I promise she will still be here when you wake up, da?"

"Da," Shane says with a little smile.

Deciding they've all had a very eventful day and could all do with a bit of rest, Ilya sets Mila down in the little bassinet they've set up by their bed, making sure she's nice and cozy in there before he helps Shane lay down comfortably, arranging pillows behind his back to support his sore body.

Shane is so exhausted he's already dozing off by the time Ilya makes it back to his side of the bed, and Ilya presses one last gentle kiss to his temple, along with a matching one to Mila's tiny little nose, before he joins Shane under the covers.

His right hand finds the cross hanging around his neck, and he sends his mama a silent thank you for sending Shane to him and for keeping him and Mila safe today.

Feeling more content than he ever remembers feeling before, surrounded by the two most important people in his life, in the cottage where this whole thing started all these years ago, Ilya drifts off to dreams of their brand new little family of three.

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