

Game Time: Third Period

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Game Time: Third Period

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Summary

Seasoned parents Shane and Ilya welcome their third child into the world.

Notes

This is a one-shot spinoff of my original [it's always been you](#). This one-shot contains several references to the main work as well as the other one-shots in the series, but may be read as a standalone with limited confusion.

FYI: Any dialogue written in italics means that it's spoken in Russian.

Shane was eating his words. For selfish reasons, he had wished that their third child would be born during the holidays. That way, when the newborn inevitably woke their siblings up throughout the night, Misha and Mari would have some time to adjust to their brand new brother or sister during the lesser structured time of the kids' winter break. But now that he was forty weeks pregnant and the baby was still more cozy than ever in Shane's belly, he was starting to regret his wish. And, winter break was still less than a week away.

With this being the third addition to the Hollander-Rozanov household, Shane and Ilya decided to take a relatively laidback approach. They decided to wait until the delivery to find out the baby's gender, but they already had names picked out for both a boy or girl. This was Shane, after all, he was going to be laid back but he was definitely going to be prepared as well. Plus, now that Ilya had retired and Shane was paternity leave, everything was going to be fine, regardless of when the baby decided to come into the world.

The smell of turkey bacon and warm cinnamon oatmeal perfumed the kitchen as Shane finely diced some Granny Smith apples to top off the oatmeal. Eggs were still banned from the kitchen as they were the only food that continuously made him sick to the stomach just by the smell alone.

Mari, fully dressed for daycare, came pattering in the kitchen, immediately bolting to Shane.

"Is she done yet?" Mari mumbled into Shane's stomach. She was looking at his belly so intently that her hazel eyes were nearly crossed-eyed.

Even before Shane knew he was pregnant, Misha was insistent that his next sibling would be a sister. This insistence has traveled to Mari, who wanted nothing more than to have a baby sister, despite Shane and Ilya's constant reminders that the baby could be a boy too.

"Not yet, Mari." Shane smoothed his hand over Mari's chestnut hair, which Ilya had pulled back into a high ponytail.

Mari had the most tame hair between Ilya, Misha, and her, with her dad and brother having a lion's mane of curls. She, on the other hand, had smooth waves that only scrunched up into curl-like textures when wet. It made it a lot easier for them to do her hair in the morning.

"Just a few more days."

To affirm Shane's words, the baby gave a strong kick right where Mari was resting her chin.

"Hey, *sunshine* kicked me," Mari giggled.

The only firm decision they had made towards the baby was that their nickname was going to be "sunshine" in Russian. It was a beautiful spring day when Shane and Ilya had told their kids that there was going to be a new addition to the family, and the sun continued to shower its rays upon them when they spread the news to the family and friends too.

"They're just saying 'hi, I can't wait you meet you, Mari!'"

“I can’t wait either!” Mari lightly patted Shane’s stomach where she last felt the baby kick.

Both Mari and Shane stilled for a minute, waiting for the baby to respond. The sound of sizzling bacon on the stove filled the silence. After a few seconds, nothing happened.

“Maybe the baby went back to sleep. It is still very early in the morning. Why don’t you go sit down? Daddy will bring you your breakfast.”

A little dejected, Mari climbed onto her seat at the table while Shane plated up oatmeal, garnishing it with the apples he diced and a drizzle of maple syrup. Before Shane could call out for Misha, he trudged into the kitchen, face covered with blanket lines and eyes slightly puffy. It never got old to Shane to see how much their children took after their papa.

“Good morning, *malyshka*.” Shane pressed a kiss to the top of Misha’s head.

“Morning, Daddy. Morning, *sunshine*,” Misha mumbled as he sleepily rubbed Shane’s belly.

Again, the baby made no movement, which Shane was a little grateful for. When the baby was active, they used Shane’s ribs as a set of xylophones that demanded to be slammed against. Just last night, the baby decided that a xylophone recital was very necessary at three in the morning. Right now, with the baby not moving, it was as comfortable as Shane could get. Even with a belly band on, his back constantly ached, feet and ankles painfully swelled, and he was so tired all the damn time.

“Have you guys seen your papa?” Shane set the bacon on top of paper towel and patted off the excess grease before giving it to the children.

“Papa did my hair!” Mari enthusiastically said before shoving a spoonful of oatmeal into her mouth.

“You look beautiful, *my miracle*,” Shane said as he pushed Mari’s seat closer towards the table. Otherwise, she would have found some way to wear half of her breakfast.

“She is one of my best works, yes?” Ilya smirked, coming in with wet hair and donning an old Centaurs sweatshirt.

If Shane weren’t so uncomfortable from being so overly pregnant, he would have blushed a little. Instead, he reached his arm out to signal Ilya to come over. “Thank you for getting them ready,” Shane pecked his husband on the cheek.

“Thank you for making breakfast. Could not have been easy considering you already have a bun in the oven.” Ilya reciprocated by giving Shane a kiss on the lips and placing his hand atop Shane’s belly.

“I hate that you know that phrase, but you’re lucky I love you.”

“I am the luckiest. I know this.” Eyes shining, Ilya flashed Shane with a dazzling yet genuine smile. In his eyes, Shane saw their children.

Ilya maneuvered himself so that he stood behind Shane. Slowly, he placed his hands on the underside of Shane's protruding belly and gently lifted it. Immediately, it felt like Shane could breathe again and he leaned into Ilya's hold.

"Can we stay like this forever?" Shane moaned.

"I wish we could but it is not good for you or *sunshine* if we did this for too long."

Shane sighed. "You're right."

This was going to be their last child, so Shane should enjoy being pregnant for the next few days, even if it did make him feel like a beached whale. With this baby being fifty percent Hollander and fifty percent Rozanov—so one hundred percent stubborn and headstrong—there was large a chance that their sunshine was going to take their sweet time. *Sunshine* was going to come into the world at their own pace and on their own terms. That was fine with Shane, as long as they didn't have a Christmas birthday; he didn't want his baby to share a birthday with a massive holiday. That was just sad.

Just as slowly and gently as he started, Ilya released his hold on Shane. Shane tried his best not to grumble at the returning aches and weight on his body. Ilya kissed Shane's temple before sipping on a cup of coffee that Shane had prepared for him. Shane couldn't wait until he could have coffee again. Decaf was just not the same, no matter how much he tried to convince himself.

"Misha and Mari," Shane began, "remember that Grandma and Grandpa will be picking you up today. Grandpa will be taking you to practice today. Daddy and Papa are going to the doctor to see if everything is still okay with *our sunshine*."

"*Sunshine* and Daddy sick?" Mari whimpered, already having forgotten that monthly turned bi-weekly checkups for Shane and the baby were completely normal.

"No, Mari. Just a check up to see baby. The doctor has a special machine to let them see the baby," Misha replied, using words and phrases that he'd heard Shane and Ilya use.

God, Shane couldn't wait to see Misha to become an older brother all over again. Yet, there was this feeling tugging at his heart. Shane was an only child so he didn't know what it was like to have a sibling. He just worried that Misha felt like he had too much responsibilities as the eldest and would shoulder too much by himself, not that either Shane or Ilya had that expectation for their son.

Shortly announcing baby number three, Shane and Ilya took Misha out for a father-son date. They skated around the Canadian Tire Centre rink during after-hours (Mari had a sleepover with the Pike children) and explicitly told Misha that it was their job to take care of him and his siblings—that Misha was also their child that needed to be taken care of. Yes, there were some duties that he had as the oldest brother, like setting a good example for his sister, but Shane and Ilya had no expectations for Misha to raise the new baby or take care of Mari while they were occupied with the newborn. Misha looked a little uncertain at first, but after multiple reassurances and a couple of races, he accepted what he was told.

“Thank you, *Malyshka*. Did you pack your gear already?” Shane leaned on the counter.

What he really wanted was to go become one with the couch but he knew that once he was sat, there was no going back up unless an industrial crane was involved. There was also the fact that Shane would probably need to pee immediately as the baby settled on top of his bladder too.

“Yup! Double-checked with Papa last night!” Misha proceeded to eat the turkey bacon just as his papa would: held in between his thumb and pointer finger and scarfing it down in just two bites.

“That’s my boy,” Shane said.

Shane was really eating his words. He didn’t think that he would be confined onto the sofa, engulfed in an extra-large reindeer Christmas sweater on Christmas Eve while his children decorated gingerbread men with their parents and Ilya. Initially, Shane tried to join in, but his stomach kept getting in the way and unsurprisingly, there was no way he could participate without being overwhelmingly uncomfortable. Even sitting on the couch was uncomfortable for him right now. He had a pillow wedged behind his back and a pillow supporting his belly, but still nothing worked.

On the account that Shane was so heavily pregnant and even car rides were a struggle, their parents came over for the holiday. The entire family, with some help from Shane, made Christmas dinner together. Now, they were making cookies for “Santa,” even though Santa had already eaten half a dozen cookies and guzzled half a carton of alcohol-free eggnog.

Suddenly, his entire stomach tensed up. Shane had to dig his hand into the cushions to brace himself. While he did desperately want the baby to come out, he still didn’t want the baby to have their birthday on Christmas.

“*My beloved*, are you okay?” Ilya immediately walked over. Nowadays, it seemed like he had a sixth sense for Shane.

“Just a Braxton hick.”

Shane couldn’t help but smile at his husband. Ilya had some royal icing smeared onto his cheek and there was even a little bit in his curls. While the mess usually could have been passed off for the children’s, Shane knew Ilya better than that.

“Come here, *Ilyusha*.” Shane gave Ilya a small kiss on the lips before shifting his mouth over the icing on Ilya’s cheek and licking it off. Immediately, his husband’s warm coffee scent filled his nose and spiked in intensity as Shane tasted the sweet icing.

“Your parents are here,” Ilya said, the tips of his ears quickly reddening.

“And I’m forty-one weeks pregnant. I don’t think we’ll be doing anything any time soon,” Shane lightly laughed.

Despite his words, Shane was filled with desire, which was exactly how he ended up here in the first place. How could he not when his husband was so attentive and caring?

Immediately, Ilya knelt before Shane and placed his hands on the sides of Shane’s belly. “Please come out soon, *my sunshine*.”

“Ilya, are you telling our child to come out *for the sake of sex*?” Shane said the latter half of his sentence in Russian so that present company wouldn’t understand. Their children didn’t know what that word meant yet, so he wasn’t too worried about them hearing it.

“No, I told them to come out so that you could be more comfortable.” His hazel eyes were fixed on the swell of Shane’s stomach as he rubbed soothing circles into it.

Hearing their papa’s voice, the baby kicked several times. Shane tried to not wince as their foot landed straight onto his ribs. Just like their siblings, this baby had strong legs. Maybe the three of them should have a go at soccer.

“You like listening to your papa talk, don’t you?” Ilya cooed, continuing to rub Shane’s stomach. *“Papa will talk to you as much as you’d like, but just make sure you don’t hurt Daddy too much. He is working very hard to keep you safe and make you big and strong, so you need to be extra nice to him. You will love him just as much as I do.”*

The look on Ilya’s face could only be described as sheer adoration. Under the dim glow of the Christmas tree, Ilya’s eyes were twinkling as they looked at Shane and his stomach. As time passed by with Ilya by his side, Shane was continuously proven wrong with just how much he thought he could possibly love his husband.

“If you keep talking like that then I’ll have to rescind my earlier statement,” Shane whispered as he combed through Ilya’s sandy curls.

“You know, sex is good for inducing labour, so...” Ilya’s face slightly morphed with a dash of mischievousness.

The baby rolled before placing even more pressure than once thought possible on Shane’s bladder. Shane thought he needed to pee before but now he really needed to go.

“Later, please.”

Shane removed the pillow from under his belly and began the choreography of climbing off of the couch. With Ilya here, however, it was much easier. Ilya took both of Shane’s hands and easily pulled him to his feet. As soon as he was on his feet, he dashed to the bathroom and could hear Ilya chuckling from the comfort of the living room.

“A little lower please,” Shane moaned.

Ilya sat behind Shane on their bed, giving him his nightly massage. With warmed up oatmeal lotion, Ilya’s warm hands traversed lower down Shane’s back and kneaded the tight muscles there. *Sunshine* was sitting so low in his pelvis now that his back was constantly killing him, even more so since last night. A groan of relief escaped Shane’s mouth as the pain started to dissipate into a lingering but light throb.

“Your hands are magical,” Shane added.

The massage was so heavenly that Shane would have nearly passed out from sheer pleasure, though Ilya’s hands (and the baby uncomfortably sat in Shane’s body) was keeping him tethered to reality.

“Your body is magical,” Ilya replied with a hushed voice. “You’re the one creating life.”

“And I’m ready for this magical body to eject this baby.”

Now that it was Boxing Day, Shane was a little desperate to get this baby out. The time of enjoying pregnancy was long over. Now, he was ready to be holding their third bundle of joy in his arms, even if it did mean that he would soon have to endure several hours of labour.

While Shane was no longer worried about delivering a premature baby, he was still worried about having complications with labour. Mari’s birth still felt so fresh and Shane could hear the doctor’s words as if it were just whispered directly into his ears: *baby’s heartbeat is dropping. Prep for emergency c-section.* Shane was lucky in that he was still able to deliver naturally. Then all that followed—the weeks in the NICU—still loomed in his mind.

“What are you thinking about?” Ilya asked.

Shane smoothed his hand over his belly. There was really no hiding anything from Ilya. “As much as I want them to come out, I want everything to go right. I’m scared.”

Wordlessly, Ilya climbed so that he sat right before Shane. The absence of Ilya’s hands immediately made the pain and ache return to Shane’s body, but there was a different pain that occupied Shane’s mind now. Now, Ilya took both of Shane’s hands and held them in his own.

“I am scared too, *my beloved*. But we have to beautiful and healthy babies sleeping in their rooms right now and when *sunshine* decides to come, we will have an entire room of medical support to make sure that everything goes as well as it can.”

Tears immediately started to well in Shane’s eyes. He truly did get hit the jackpot in every aspect of his life. “*I love you.*”

Ilya pressed their foreheads together with a little difficulty since the bump got into the way. “*I love you.* Everything we go through, we will go through together.”

Shane craned his neck just enough so that he could bring their lips together. The first kiss was a little wet and stringy on the account of Shane’s tears, but Ilya didn’t care as he cradled

Shane's jaw and initiated for more. A hum of content came from Ilya as Shane swiped his tongue across Ilya's lips, and he eagerly accepted. The slightly differing taste of their toothpastes mingled in their mouths.

"What do you think about trying to induce labour?" Shane asked, eyes sharp with desire and citing their previous conversation.

"If that's what you want."

"Tell me what you want, Ilya."

Shane knew that they were well past the potential of Ilya not wanting Shane anymore. Ilya had shown time and again that he loved Shane no matter what shape his body was in. But, Shane knew that Ilya was probably tired after being such an excellent host to their parents and rearing their excited children.

"I always want you. Always."

Once again, Ilya pressed a searing kiss to Shane's lips, practically devouring him. Instinctively, Shane tangled his fingers into Ilya's curls, begging for his husband for more. Quickly, all articles of clothing came off. Really, it was only Ilya's shirt that Shane was wearing and both of their briefs. When both of them had a husband to keep them warm throughout the night, they didn't need to wear much.

With the baby in the way and every position being all shades of uncomfortable, Shane kneeled on the bed on all fours. It was still very unpleasant as all of his joints ached but it was the least uncomfortable position to be in. As he settled on the mattress, the baby rolled around his stomach, clearly active from the surge in Shane's heartbeat.

"Tell me if anything feels uncomfortable, yes?" Ilya said from behind.

"Of course, now please get inside of me." Shane sounded almost too whiny if it weren't for the fact that a warm chuckle erupted from Ilya's chest.

Slowly, Ilya parted Shane's cheeks and Shane had to exert all of the self control he had to prevent himself from pushing himself further into Ilya's touch. Even though he was desperate to get things moving along, they did have to take things slowly. It wasn't just Shane and Ilya here, so they couldn't take things as quickly or as roughly as they normally did.

Ilya pressed a trail of kisses down the small of Shane's back and ended at Shane's entrance, which was nearly dripping with slick. Shane was sure that Ilya was nearly drooling at the sight. After waiting almost an eternity, Shane cried out as Ilya started working his tongue against him. The sounds in the room were absolutely lewd: Shane's restrained moans and Ilya unabashed slurps. Shane was absolutely grateful that both of his children were heavy sleepers and his parents had already gone home. Aside from baby number three, no one else needed to be privy of what Shane and Ilya were doing.

Unable to resist anymore, Shane pushed himself back into Ilya's face, needing more immediately. Ilya was quick to add a finger into the equation and Shane moaned out at the

momentary pressure he felt as Ilya gently made his way in.

“More, please,” Shane said, almost shaking with anticipation.

“Patience, *my beloved*.”

Shane nearly growled upon hearing those words, but relented.

Slowly but surely, Ilya worked his way up to three digits and pulled out every imaginable sounds of pleasure from Shane. Shane was already impossibly close but he needed to have Ilya in him—that was how they were going to need penetration to induce labour. Plus, Shane wasn’t someone to shy away from overstimulation.

“Condom?” Ilya grunted.

Shane was completely void of Ilya’s touch. “I swear to god, Rozanov, if you don’t get inside me right now-”

“Okay, okay. No condom. Ready?”

Shane bit his tongue to refrain from being too snappy again and nodded instead. He already felt bad that Ilya already tended to his every need and had to deal with his pregnancy brain—Ilya didn’t deserve to be on the receiving end to his shortening patience either.

“Sorry, yes. I’m ready.”

“No need to be sorry to me, Sweetheart. You have given me the entire world.”

“Ilya...” Great, now Shane was unbelievably horny and on the verge of tears.

Ilya kissed the base of Shane’s spine before lining himself up with Shane. The moment his tip pressed against Shane’s entrance, Shane was quick to push back, inviting for more immediately. Both of them groaned as Shane took Ilya to the hilt, completely bottoming out. Shane repositioned himself slightly, readying himself for Ilya to start thrusting, and when Ilya did, Shane swore that he could start seeing stars or even the entire galaxy at this point.

Having already had two children naturally, sex was inevitably different but it didn’t take away from how much either of them loved it. It was never just sex for the two of them—it was about loving each other and showing that love in the most humanly natural way possible.

“Is everything okay?” Ilya said through gritted teeth.

“Fuck-amazing, *Ilyusha*.”

Ilya kept his hands firm around Shane’s hips as he pounded into Shane over and over again. To be honest, the weight of *sunshine* did make Shane feel tired, so much so that he didn’t think that he would be able to last much longer. Fatigue was a familiar friend to Shane, so he wouldn’t be surprised if he came untouched within the next few moments. But, his wrists and knees were throbbing now from carrying both of their weights and it was verging into more discomfort than Shane would have liked.

“Can we-can we switch a position?” Shane spoke through a moan.

Immediately, Ilya pulled out. “Are you hurt?”

Shane knew that Ilya meant if he had hurt Shane or the baby in any way.

“Not at all. My wrists are a little sore but I want to stand.”

“Whatever you need, Sweetheart.”

With Ilya’s help, Shane stood up from the bed. The ended up by the wall, with Shane’s hands splayed out their cream coloured walls and Ilya holding the weight of his belly as he jackhammered into Shane. While it still wasn’t the most comfortable—and Shane couldn’t feel Ilya as deeply—not having to support all of the baby’s weight now was a huge relief to Shane.

“Fuck-Shane. You take me so well.”

“I’m all yours—shit, I’m close—take as much as you want.”

Squeezing his eyes shut, Shane just focused on how hard Ilya was for him and how Ilya continuously pounded against his prostate. With this new position, he wasn’t sure he could touch himself without falling or stumbling, so he would have to come untouched. Still, pleasure continued to pool low in stomach.

“Close?” Ilya grunted. His grip was still firm around Shane’s bump.

Shane could only answer through the overwhelming release in his body, coming all over the swell of his stomach. The sudden clench of Shane’s heat sent Ilya over the edge as well, as only with two more thrusts, he came too.

“Well shit,” Shane breathlessly laughed, “that was hot.”

“Anything with you is hot.” Ilya nuzzled his nose into the crook of Shane’s neck. “Let’s clean up and get you to bed.”

At some point with Shane’s pregnancy with Misha, he had learned to give into his cravings. He had to learn the hard way that fighting the cravings only made them much worse. So if he was woken up at three-thirty in the morning with a bone-aching craving for cookie dough ice cream sandwiched in white bread with chocolate sauce drizzled on top, he was going to get exactly that. Plus, the activities from last night seemed to make Shane extra ravenous, so Shane wasn’t going to deny himself.

Shane wasn’t worried about waking Ilya up since that’s where their children inherited their heavy sleeping from. Still, he made sure to be gentle when he pried himself away from Ilya’s

slightly snoring figure. As he did every time he needed to get up, Shane quite literally rolled himself out of bed with several grunts.

The moment Shane passed through the threshold of their bedroom door, he had to grab onto the frame as his entire belly tightened. Slowly breathing through it, Shane counted how long it lasted for. Seventy seconds. A little too long and painful for it to be a Braxton hick. He had already been feeling a few contractions before he went to sleep but thankfully they were dull enough to fitfully sleep through. As soon as Shane's body relaxed, he rubbed his stomach. Today might be the day they get to meet their *sunshine*. Finally. They weren't particularly active right now but he could still feel them moving ever so slightly.

Despite the contraction, Shane still moved on. He passed by his children's bedrooms first and heard no movement so he carried on. There was no reason for Shane to believe that his children might be awake but it was his instinct still to check up on them.

In the kitchen, Shane was quick to get working on his late night craving. While a non-pregnant Shane would have preferred a slice of brioche or sourdough, a pregnant Shane craved for the most processed white bread possible: Wonder Bread. They had a specialty ice cream scoop that ice cream parlours had so it was easy for him to get perfect scoops of his cookie dough ice cream with little effort. He placed both scoops of ice cream on a slice of bread and folded it so that it was almost like a taco. And then, to top it all off, a heavy drizzling of Hershey's chocolate syrup. It didn't matter to Shane that the syrup wasn't remotely close to chocolate—it was just exactly what his body needed.

Shane nearly cried out of complete happiness as he took a bite of the ice cream taco. It was everything that he wanted. Then Shane really started crying, thinking about how he could only fulfill his wildest cravings at any given time because Ilya did such a good job of listening to Shane and keeping their kitchen overflowing with whatever Shane wanted. He loved Ilya so much that he didn't know what to do with it.

Snotty and inexplicably out of tears, Shane continued to eat, only pausing halfway through when another contraction rolled through his body. It was definitely stronger this time but lasted just as long. Still, Shane carried on with eating when he recovered. There was no point in stopping, especially not when he wasn't in active labour yet. He would start worrying once his water broke and the contractions came closer together in timing. Dr. Patel did warn him and Ilya that labours typically progressed faster when it was not the parent's first pregnancy.

Shane carried on as normal. He finished his ice cream taco, loaded his dirty dishes into dishwasher, and even took a couple sips of water. Even though he was parched, he cautioned against chugging water to save himself from needing to go to the bathroom even more than normal.

It was right as Shane put away one of Misha's dinosaur toys that was left on the kitchen counter that a trickle of water went down the side of his legs. Then as soon as he noticed it, the trickle became a big gush.

“Okay, it's game time isn't it, *sunshine*?”

Shane was too stubborn in his ways to be panicked with Misha when his water broke; Shane just wanted Ilya to enjoy his last moments on the ice before he became a father. With Mari, he was downright distraught for good reasons. But with this baby, a sense of calm washed over him—a sense of “I’ve done it before and I’m going to do it again” filled his body.

Dropping some paper towels on the floor, Shane used his feet to wipe away any of the remaining liquids that dripped out of him. Likewise, he used his foot to pick up the dirtied paper towels since it would be an impossible feat for him to bend over. Then he made his way upstairs, where Ilya was splayed out over Shane’s side of the bed, still blissfully asleep.

The first thing Shane did was change out of his wet boxers and swapped it for comfortable clothes. He wanted to be as comfortable as possible for the next more uncomfortable hours of his life.

“*Ilyusha, wake up.*” Shane gently carded his fingers through Ilya’s hair.

Shane didn’t dare sit down. He was worried that one, he wouldn’t be able to get back up, and two, that he would dirty the bed if there was residual waters to be leaked. So, he stood by the edge of the bed as he watched Ilya softly groan and stir.

Shane repeated himself.

Hearing Shane’s voice, Ilya immediately sat up, a little too fast for Shane’s liking. “*What’s going on? Is everything okay?*” Even though his face was still wracked with fatigue, Ilya’s voice couldn’t have sounded more alert.

“*It’s time.*”

To add emphasis to his words, *Sunshine* decided that this was an appropriate time to headbutt Shane’s bladder. Shane breathed through the moment, trying to make sure that he didn’t pee himself from the sudden contact. At least it wasn’t a contraction.

“Your water broke? When did this happen?” Ilya shot up and took Shane’s hands, thumbs rubbing soothing circles into Shane’s skin.

“Just a few minutes ago. I’m going to call Mom and see if she and Dad can come over to take care of the kids.”

“I can do it. You should rest, *my beloved.*”

“No, I think I’d prefer if I did it. I want to move around while I still ca-”

Shane’s words were interrupted with another contraction. He gripped Ilya’s shoulders as he let it pass. Meanwhile, Ilya held onto Shane’s waist and talked him through the contraction, guiding him to take deep breaths.

“I’m-I’m okay,” Shane spoke through the contraction. “Could you please get the car ready? I’ll call my mom.”

It only took two rings for Yuna to pick up. Ever since Shane had entered his third trimester, she had made sure that her phone was at full volume and fully charged at any given moment. While there were moments in his life where Shane found his mom's (over)preparedness a little overwhelming, he couldn't be more grateful for it now. Being a dad now, he knew that Yuna only came from a place of love and care.

"What's going on, honey?" His mom's voice sleepily croaked.

"Someone decided that they were an earlyriser and my water broke."

There was some rustling on Yuna's end, followed by her calling for David. "Your dad and I will be there in twenty minutes. Take it easy, Shane. Remember to breathe deeply."

"Thank you, Mom. I'll try."

Sunshine firmly kicked the side of Shane's stomach.

"*Sunshine* says that they can't wait to meet Grandma and Grandpa."

"Oh honey, we can't wait to meet them either," Yuna cooed. "Okay, I'll get dressed now. Love you. See you later."

"See you, Mom. Love you too."

Maybe this sense of calm was something that Shane could adopt in all areas of his life. Now admitted in the hospital and waiting for Shane to completely dilate, Shane was just peacefully waiting. While it was still painful—the last contraction was definitely stronger and longer than previous ones—being so relaxed (and medicated) helped eased Shane through the labour. He was already a whopping six centimetres dilated by the time they arrived and now the baby was taking their sweet, sweet time to come into the world for the home stretch. In the past two hours that they had been here, Shane had only progressed one more centimetre.

Fatherhood had definitely changed Shane for the better. After seeing his baby boy being checked into the dasher boards a few times or seeing his baby girl take a huge tumble off of the swings, he knew how much his heart could take. So however and whenever this baby decided to come, Shane was ready.

"The cafeteria only had one cold one left," Ilya said, holding a can of ginger ale.

"You are a godsend," Shane said as he took a sip. "Thank you."

"Thank you, Shane. You're doing all the work here. I just got you a drink."

"I love you."

Ilya kissed Shane's temple and rubbed his shoulders. "I love you."

Their silence was quickly interrupted by Shane's phone. Before Shane could say anything, the sounds of their daughter crying filled the room. Looking at the screen, it was six-thirty, so Mari probably just woke up.

"What's wrong, *my miracle*?" Shane asked.

"Where are you, Daddy? You and Papa not-not here when I woke up."

If Shane could teleport, he would go home right now to be with his daughter and comfort her in whatever way she needed.

"Daddy is at the hospit-" Shane firmly gripped onto the railings of his hospital bed as he braced himself for a contraction. He clamped his teeth onto his lower lip and took shaky but deep breaths to make sure that his daughter wouldn't hear his pain. Still, despite his efforts, a groan escaped.

"Daddy?" Mari asked.

Ilya kept his hands firmly on Shane's shoulders for support. "*Mari, Daddy and I are at the hospital. Sunshine decided that they would like to meet their sister soon.*"

"Really?" Mari's voice croaked.

"Yes, really! Daddy and Papa will be busy for a little bit, but Grandma, Grandpa, and Misha will be with you the entire time. They will watch movies with you if you ask nicely."

"Okay, Papa."

"Did you brush your teeth already?"

Knowing their daughter, Mari probably was still in bed with red eyes and snot rolling down her nose.

"No."

"Why don't you go brush your teeth. Maybe Grandma or Grandpa can help you do your hair too."

"Okay."

"Papa has to go now, but you'll be able to see your new sibling soon! I love you, Mari."

"I love you too, baby girl," Shane said, finally recovered from the contraction.

"Love you," Mari mumbled.

"I'm sorry guys," David's familiar voice said. "I didn't want to bother you but she wouldn't calm down."

“It’s more than okay. Is Misha okay too?” Shane asked.

“He’s a little worried about his dad, but more excited than anything.”

Shane looked at Ilya who looked as smitten as Shane felt. “Please tell him that we love him too.”

“Alright, will do. I’ll let you guys do your thing. Love you.”

“Love you too, Dad.”

David cleared his throat. “I think you have something you’d like to say to me too, Ilya?”

Ilya flushed with pink. “Love you too, Dad.”

“Love you too, bud.”

Ilya was still blushing by the time Shane hung up. It never ceased to please Shane to see his husband receive the love he deserves. It was adorable to see how he was so easily turned into a shy baby when Ilya received what Shane thought was a normal amount of love from their parents.

Shane held Ilya’s warm hand and squeezed, trying to cement it in Ilya’s brain that he deserved every ounce of love that he’d been shown.

“Are you comfortable enough? Do you need anything?” With his free hand, Ilya brushed Shane’s sweat-soaked hair away from his forehead.

“I have everything I need right here, but getting this baby out of me would be pretty nice too.”

“That last contraction looked a little bit rough. I can go get the nurse.”

“No, I think it’s fine. Will you help me up though? I want to try walking around a little bit.”

Mindful of the IV Shane was attached to, Ilya helped Shane to his feet. Holding onto the IV drip like cane, Shane slowly paced around the room while Ilya trailed behind him just a few steps behind. With each step, he was painfully aware of how much lower the baby now sat in his pelvis. He just couldn’t wait.

“Thank god... this is the last one!” Shane grunted as he pushed.

He knew he was crushing Ilya’s hand but there wasn’t anything either of them could do about it. The hand crushing absolutely paled in comparison to the sheer amount of pain that rippled through his body—the ring of fire was burning a hole in Shane that he thought he would

never recover from. Unlike his previous births, Shane had to lie on his side because it was the most comfortable that he felt while pushing.

The only thing that kept Shane tethered to reality besides the blinding pain was Ilya's sweet yet rich coffee scent.

"You're doing amazing, *my beloved*."

Ilya knelt in front of Shane, looking at him with nothing but love and adoration. His hazel eyes were blown wide with concentration and his brows were slightly knit together.

"You are doing great, Shane," Dr. Patel confirmed.

Shane felt how she was touching him and making sure that the baby was crowning at an appropriate pace. The clinical touches were a bit uncomfortable but there was a fucking huge half-Russian baby trying to burst through him.

"It sure doesn't feel fucking amazing," Shane panted.

"I know, I know." Ilya kissed Shane's sweat-covered forehead. "You are so strong, Shane."

A scream ripped through Shane's throat as another contraction bulldozed through him. "Fuck you and your big ass Russian hockey genes!"

"I'm know, I'm so sorry, Shane."

"Push, Shane. Push, push, push," said Dr. Patel.

Shane couldn't respond that he was really trying—the words entirely dissipated and transformed into another groan as he pushed with what little energy he had in his body. He squeezed his eyes close so tightly but tears still managed to trail down the side of his face. While sex really did help induce his labour, that meant he went to bed later, and having water breaking at nearly three in the morning meant that Shane got a whopping four hours of sleep last night.

"Head is almost out. Just a few more pushes." Dr. Patel's voice sounded distant as Shane tried to recover.

Eyes still closed, Shane felt Ilya's weight shift around. Still, Ilya never let go of Shane's hand.

"Shane," Ilya gasped. "*Sunshine* has my hair."

Weakly, Shane cracked his eyes open, to find Ilya even more teary-eyed. The thought of having a sandy haired baby made Shane's heart swoon, so much so that he felt a little bit of energy returning to his body. Now he really couldn't wait until they were here so he could carefully inspect what traits they took from Shane and Ilya.

"Really?"

“Really.” Ilya squeezed Shane’s hand.

“Guess we really did pick the perfect nickname, huh?”

“Everything you do is perfect.” Ilya kissed Shane’s knuckles.

“Fuck off,” Shane tiredly laughed.

After three more gruelling rounds of pushes, a bright and clear cry rang out in the room. Shane could only cry as Dr. Patel placed their baby right in front of Shane’s face.

“It’s a beautiful girl, Dads. Congratulations,” Dr. Patel announced.

“A girl!” Ilya exclaimed.

Even though Shane’s entire body was shaking as if he were struck with a case of severe hypothermia, he gently brushed his knuckle against his crying baby’s cheek. Just like Ilya had said, she was covered with golden hair, just a little lighter than Ilya’s hair. Her face was pink and all scrunched up but she looked undeniably Shane and Ilya’s.

“Welcome to the world, *my sunshine*,” Shane cooed. “This is your daddy speaking.”

Upon hearing his voice, she immediately started to cry less and even started stretching her face, as if she were ready to face the world and open her eyes.

“Keep talking, *my beloved*,” Ilya whispered, also brushing his knuckle against their newborn’s soft skin. “She likes hearing her daddy talk.”

She also started to settle more as Ilya spoke too. How could she not when the entire family took every free moment talking to her? Shane was sure that she was more than well-acquainted with all of their voices, maybe even a little annoyed since she couldn’t escape.

During all of this, Shane knew that Dr. Patel was helping him deliver the placenta as cramps and more clinical touches invaded his body. But he couldn’t care less at all.

“That was your papa speaking. We love you so much, and your brother and sister cannot wait to meet you either.”

As soon as she heard the mention of her siblings, she stopped crying and opened her eyes, revealing dark brown eyes.

“Uh-oh, Papa is in trouble,” Ilya mumbled, sounding unbelievable taken by their daughter. “How could I ever say no to those beautiful brown eyes?”

“Like you don’t already have trouble saying no to Misha and Mari’s hazel eyes?”

“It’s same but different. Those are mini Ilyas. This is a mini Shane looking right back at me. But all of my children are beautiful.”

Shane wanted to kiss Ilya but couldn't find the energy or strength to do so. He was utterly depleted. All he could do was look at their beautiful daughter.

“Dad, are you ready for some skin-to-skin?”

Honestly, Ilya felt like he was dreaming. Even though he had two prior experiences, every time he got to hold their baby for the first time just felt too good to be true.

Nurse Bailey was in soft lilac scrubs and held their *sunshine* in a loose bundle of white blankets. Ilya was more than ready to hold her, already having taken off his shirt and sat down in. The baby let out a few grunts and whines as Bailey handed her over to Ilya. But the moment her tiny weight settled in Ilya's arms, he was a complete goner. Just as Ilya was completely Misha's, Mari's, and Shane's, he was going to do everything in his power to love this little girl with every ounce that he had and then some.

As Ilya settled her weight against his chest, she squirmed and whined.

“My sunshine, it's your papa. It's okay, you don't have to cry,” he said, cradling her head with one hand and lightly patting her back with the other.

Recognizing his voice, she began to calm down, but still whimpered. It still amazed Ilya that their children recognized his voice so quickly. All of that talking to Shane's belly really paid off. A light kiss to her head seemed to placate her entirely. She smelled so milky and exactly how Ilya remembered Misha and Mari smelling—he wished he could bottle up this newborn smell forever.

“I have loved you since the moment your daddy and I found out about you, and I promise to love you forever. There is absolutely nothing you could do or say that could stop your papa from loving you. I promise this until the day I die.”

Ilya's face was already puffy on the account of all of the crying that he did, but he could feel hot tears rolling down his face as he continued to take in their daughter's presence. She was perfect. Everything was perfect all because of Shane.

Everything good that Ilya had in his life was all because of his husband, whom he couldn't be prouder of. Shane laid in his hospital bed, watching Ilya interact with their daughter with half-open, tired eyes—the very brown eyes that Ilya had fallen hopelessly in love with and now was mirrored in their daughter's eyes. Still, he couldn't have looked more beautiful to Ilya.

“Thank you, Shane. I love you,” Ilya said through his tears.

“I love you,” Shane replied, fatigue laced in his voice.

“I am so proud of you. Thank you. Thank you.”

Shane had laboured for fourteen hours with little to no sleep. Not to mention that he created and carried their daughter for nearly forty-two weeks. There were no words that Ilya could use to thank Shane enough for all that he had done.

Sunshine started to lightly bunch up her hands into fists and shove them against Ilya's chest. Her face scrunched up, readying for a cry.

"It's okay, my sunshine. Papa's got you," Ilya said, bouncing her lightly.

There was no doubt in Ilya's mind that his own father never looked at Ilya or Alexei the way that Shane and Ilya looked at their daughter. Ilya, however, could picture David holding a newborn Shane the same way that Ilya held their *sunshine* now. Ilya just hoped that he could just be at least half the father and man that David was, but he was trying. Every day, he lived to make Shane and his children happy and loved.

Ilya could hear them coming down the hallway before he even saw them. Their parents' gentler reminders for them to be quiet were clear to him too. All he could do was giddily look at Shane, who requested that Ilya squish into his bed with him, and Emi, who was comfortably awake in Shane's arms. Their daughter was perfectly swaddled in a blanket that Misha and Mari had picked out together. It was white with a butter yellow border and had little suns across it.

The door creaked open, revealing a giddy Mari who could barely contain herself and a shy Misha who had his hands shoved into his pockets. David and Yuna were quick to come in afterwards.

Ilya's face immediately split into a wide, unabashed smile. There was nothing more that he wanted now than for his family to come and meet their new addition. The happiness that surged through his body almost made him forget how he hadn't slept.

"Come meet your sister." Shane smiled.

"I knew it was going to be a girl!" Misha exclaimed.

At the same time, Mari squealed and ran up to the bed while screaming "Emi!"

Emiliya Irina Hollander-Rozanov was the name that they had decided for their *sunshine*. The name was something that both kids had helped them choose—more like they were the ones who picked out the name for Shane and Ilya.

Emi immediately grunted and wiggled around in Shane's hold as the sounds of her siblings filled the room. Her brown eyes were unfocused but seemingly looked at Shane's face. Judging on her expression, she maybe didn't know that her siblings would be so loud now

that she was outside of the womb. But Ilya was confident that she was soon adapt and come to love her siblings' energy.

With Shane and Ilya's approval, Misha helped Mari onto the bed before he sat beside Shane too. Mari squished herself in between Shane and Ilya while never tearing her eyes away from Emi. Yuna and David filmed the entire interaction with watery eyes.

At the sight of his entire family in the room with him, Ilya's eyes started welling up with tears. Years ago, when he just landed in Canada all by himself at eighteen, he would have never guessed that he would have found the love of his life and had an entirely new family—a family that loved him just as much as his mama did. Surely, Ilya was the luckiest man alive.

Shane seemed to be in a similar state as Ilya. Ilya could only rub Shane's arm in support and Shane leaned back into his touch.

"She's so much bigger than Mari was," Misha said with awe.

"Hey, I'm not tiny!" Mari huffed.

Since Mari was born prematurely, she was only five pounds and five ounces, absolutely tiny compared to both Misha and Emi. Now, however, Mari was average height amongst her peers, maybe even a little bit taller. It just didn't help that her brother was unusually tall (almost always a head taller than his classmates and teammates) and both of her dads were tall with athletic builds, which made her look small at all times.

"You were a teeny tiny little baby, *miracle*," Misha explained. "Emi is like a huge baby compared to you."

Seeing Misha as such a gentle and loving brother never ceased to fill Ilya's chest with so much love and adoration. Ilya and Alexei were never great brothers; they lived to provoke each other in their youth and stayed away from each other as much as possible in adulthood. Maybe, having such great children like Misha and Mari (and inevitably Emi when she got older), was proof that Ilya wasn't such a big fuck up after all.

"Did you know that you were even bigger?" Shane said.

"Emi was eight pounds ten ounces," Ilya explained. "Misha, you were eight pounds fifteen ounces."

Distantly, David whistled while Yuna groaned in sympathy.

Misha shrugged. "Makes sense. Maybe she'll be tall like me."

"I wanna be tall," Mari whined.

"You are still growing, *my miracle*," Ilya said. "You will get so tall in the future, Daddy and Papa will have a hard time hugging you."

Mari relented with a huff and quickly started to rub Emi's swaddled foot. "She don't really look like us."

“But she does look like Daddy and Papa,” Misha said.

“Yeah, Papa’s hair and Daddy’s eyes.” The exact opposite combination of features that Misha and Mari had.

At the sounds of her siblings’ banter, Emi started squirming more, even starting to coo as if she could contribute to the conversation. Ilya absolutely melted at the thought, and Shane seemed like he was having the same thought process too. Tears rolled down Ilya’s face as he watched everything unfold in front of him.

“Can I hold her?” Misha shyly asked, ears red.

“Of course you can, *Malyshka*. You can too, Mari. Papa will help you guys wash your hands first,” Shane said immediately.

Ilya helped Mari off of the bed and Misha slowly climbed off of the bed by himself. While he guided them to the bathroom, he heard David and Yuna talk to Shane. He was glad that Shane could get some time with their parents now.

Ilya turned on the faucet and adjusted the temperature of the water. Somehow, the water always came out scalding hot in this room, and there was no chance he was going to let his babies burn their skin. Since Mari was too short to reach the sink by herself, Ilya rested her on his knee as she lathered soap in her hands and washed. Ilya made sure to hum happy birthday so that both kids knew how long to wash their hands for.

For the first time since they arrived at the hospital, Ilya got a glance of himself in the mirror. He looked absolutely exhausted: his skin was dry and his hair was frizzy and untamed. But it was undeniable that he was happy too, visibly so. In the mirror, Ilya also caught a glimpse of Misha. Misha’s brows were furrowed together as he rinsed the soap off of his hands. He had the same pensive look that his dad had, right down to the pouty lips.

“What are you thinking, *Malyshka*?” Ilya asked.

“Do... do you think she’ll like me?” Misha stared at the water running over his closed hands.

“I like you, Misha!” Mari exclaimed, throwing her wet hands in the air.

“That’s different, Mari,” Misha quietly mumbled.

“Different how?” Ilya gently asked. He placed Mari on the floor so that he could give Misha more attention. The door was closed so he knew that she wouldn’t bolt out and disturb the moment Shane was having with their parents. She quickly started busying herself with reorganizing the toiletries that Shane and Ilya brought.

“I don’t know, just...”

“You can tell Papa. This is a safe space.”

“Mari likes everyone and everyone likes Mari. People like me but it’s like everyone is afraid of me at first.”

Immediately, Ilya pulled Misha into a hug. He didn't know that was something that Misha had carried on his shoulders by himself. To Ilya, growing up tall and muscular was always a source of pride for him, his father, and his team. It was something that people envied or desired. But, he could see how Misha could be scared of his own size. His beautiful son did not have the same personality that he did—he was so much more mellow, kind, and gentle than Ilya ever was.

Ilya looked directly into his son's watery hazel eyes. "Thank you for telling me, *Malyshka*. *You are the best brother, the best son, the best grandson, and the best friend anyone could ever ask for. Emi already loves you so much. She already recognized your voice earlier, did you see? She tried to talk to her brother and sister.*"

"*I guess so...*"

"*You have nothing to worry about. If you are worried, talk to Papa or Daddy just like you did now. I love you. Daddy loves you. Mari loves you. And I am completely certain that Emi loves you.*"

"*I love you, Papa.*" Misha hugged Ilya, nuzzling his face into Ilya's chest.

Instinctively, Ilya ran through Misha's curls the way that his mama did.

"*I love Misha and Papa too!*" Mari squealed, somehow with lotion smeared over her face.

Right, Ilya shouldn't have put that much faith in a newly four year-old to be on her best behaviour with limited supervision. Thank goodness it was only lotion.

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Misha sat in the same chair Ilya sat in when he did skin-to-skin with Emi. His back was pressed against the back of the chair and he made sure to wiggle around a little bit to make sure that he was sat as securely as possible, just like a seasoned veteran.

Once again, David and Yuna were filming the entire interaction. Ilya was forever grateful that they had volunteered themselves to doing that. He wanted to remember days like this forever and would be sure to watch the footage over and over when they got home.

"Misha will show you how to hold the baby first, okay?" Shane told Mari, who was sprawled over Shane on the hospital bed and keenly looking at Ilya and Misha.

"Kay," Mari replied as patiently as she could.

Emi was still awake, though less alert and vocal now. Ilya rocked her back and forth just a few times so she would not be as fussy when there was a change in position. Slowly, he put Emi into Misha's arms. He didn't need to tell Misha how he should support her head and body—Misha already knew to do it.

"Emi, say hi to your big brother," Ilya cooed.

Emi stayed quiet but her eyes looked up at Misha's face.

“Hi, Emi. I’m Misha, your brother. Do you remember me?” His fingers lightly brushed over her fuzzy golden hair.

Emi let out a grunt.

“She remembers, Papa!”

“I told you she loves you.” Ilya smiled.

*“I love you so much, sunshine. We will be the bestest of friends, and I will take care of you.”*

Ilya couldn’t help but kiss the top of Misha’s head. He had already seen Misha become a big brother once before, but this time was just as special.

“Mari’s turn?” Mari asked.

“Just a moment, *my miracle*,” Shane said. “Do you see how Misha is holding Emi so that her head is in his arms? Emi can’t hold up her head by herself right now, so we have to be extra careful and gentle just like Misha is.”

Misha’s lips pulled tight into a shy but proud smile.

“You’re doing so great, Misha,” Ilya added.

“Really?” Misha was only looking at his little sister, almost searching for confirmation from her.

“You are.”

“I think Mari should have a turn now,” Misha said.

“You can still hold Emi for a little longer, if you’d like,” Shane quickly supplied.

“I can wait. I don’t think Mari can wait any longer.”

True to his words, Mari looked like she was ready to pounce off of the bed to have a go at holding the newest addition in the family.

“What do you say to Misha, Mari?” Ilya asked.

“Thank you! I wanna hold *Sunshine* now. Please!” Mari exclaimed.

Ilya helped take Emi out of Misha’s arms. Misha was quick to help Mari off of the hospital bed and helped position her so that she was ready to hold Emi now.

“Emi please!” Mari made grabby hands at Ilya.

“Okay, we need to be gentle and calm around Emi. She is very little so you need to make sure that you don’t let her head fall,” Ilya reminded as he settled Emi into Mari’s arms.

With Emi in Mari's hold, Emi did look comically large. At this angle, she looked like she was half of Mari's size. While Mari didn't have as sturdy of a hold of the baby as Misha, she was still trying her best to do as instructed. Carefully, she kissed the top of Emi's head.

"That was so nice of you, Mari," Shane said, emotions rife in his voice.

Ilya didn't know if he could even say a single word at this moment. He was all choked up and could only pull Misha into a hug. With Misha's back pulled against Ilya's chest, Ilya also managed to hold Shane's hand. Somehow, Ilya's eyes produced even more tears. He didn't know it was possible considering he had already cried so much in the past two days. All he knew was that his heart was so full and that he couldn't have asked for anything else in this world.

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