

маскировка

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by [ghosttotheparty](#)

Summary

He's already in the room, shutting the door behind himself as quietly as he can before he realises that not only is there someone other than Shane in the room, but there are *three* someones other than Shane.

And, as if he hasn't already fucked up spectacularly, the someones happen to be the Hollanders and Hayden fucking Pike.

// or; Ilya visits Shane in the hospital and meets his parents. He's traumatized and grieving, everything hurts, and Shane takes after his mother.

Notes

cw: panic attacks; discussion in narration and briefly in dialogue of little ilya finding his mother

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Camouflage

conceal the existence of (something undesirable).

"grievances should be discussed, not camouflaged"

Ilya is a smart guy. He knows he is. He speaks two languages (and he knows how to ask for vodka in three more) and he's fucking funny in both, in his humble opinion. He's quick with math, quick with tallying points mid-game and figuring out what he needs to do to win. He's good at it, and he's fucking smart.

But sometimes.

Sometimes.

He can be really fucking stupid.

Because in his rush to get out of the hallway, to escape the open space in which he was *clearly visible*, he neglected to glance through the window into Shane's room to check if anyone else was there— maybe a nurse or doctor or someone from Shane's team. And he's already in the room, shutting the door behind himself as quietly as he can before he realises that not only is there someone other than Shane in the room, but there are *three* someones other than Shane.

And, as if he hasn't already fucked up spectacularly, the someones happen to be the Hollanders and Hayden fucking Pike.

David Hollander is a perpetually confused man. He counts his blessings every day that he married such a patient woman, and that their one and only child took after her mellow manner. They're both faster learners, and if David is honest, he'd worried that Shane would take after him—which he does in other ways, really. David's never had to tell him to turn the volume down to protect his hearing or to check the expiration date on whatever's in the fridge before eating it.

But David has never really grasped the internet, or Twitter or anything like that. (Face-gram and Insta-book if he feels like being annoying to Shane, who doesn't even have either, that David knows of.) He gets confused about things people say, and the way they say them, and he gets confused about why in the actual hell Ilya Rozanov walks into rooms without knocking. And why Ilya Rozanov is here at all.

The room falls silent. Rozanov blinks, expression falling into something startled, like he hadn't been expecting them all to be there, and he steps back a little toward the door. Yuna lets out a soft *Uhm...* and it's comforting to know that she's at a loss too. Hayden doesn't say anything, but he shifts where he's standing by Shane's bed, feet twisting just slightly against the ground like he's bracing himself.

Shane breaks the silence.

"Hi," he says lightly.

He's high, woozy, and his voice is too high in his throat. It sounds ridiculous. Rozanov stares at Shane. David can't read his face, can't interpret the shine of his eyes or the way he's looking so intently at Shane in his sling and hospital gown.

"Hello," he says finally, accent heavy. "I wanted to, uhm..."

He stops. Swallows. Stares at Shane some more. David glances at Shane, checking, but he doesn't look uncomfortable or anxious—David's learned to read that on him. He tends to smile awkwardly, tilting his head or ducking it shyly, cheeks pink (which David wouldn't really be able to see now under the soft red purple bruising). His eyes flick about like he's looking for an escape.

But Shane just looks right back at Rozanov, and maybe it's that he's concussed, or maybe it's the drugs. (Shane had referred to them as 'good shit' when he'd woken up. It had caught David and Yuna and the nurse off-guard.)

"How are you feeling?" Rozanov says. "Hollander."

"Better," Shane says softly.

Rozanov nods. He shoves his hands in his pockets, and he leans back against the door a little like he's trying to seep through it, and he glances around. His eyes meet David's briefly, and David thinks he looks *scared*. He's never seen Rozanov like this, and really, he's known him a long time. Known *of* him, at least. What, since their rookie year? Maybe a little before that? He's Ilya fucking Rozanov—scary Russian, bad boy player, hockey legend even before he signed into the NHL.

He looks so small right now, hovering by the door, looking at Shane like he's searching for something.

"Marleau wanted to come see you," Rozanov says. "But the others worried it would upset you."

"So they sent you?" Hayden says. It startles David, who'd almost forgotten he was there at all.

"I, uhm..." Rozanov looks away from Shane. "I wanted to see how he is doing."

"Come here," Shane says before Hayden can reply, before Yuna can thank him politely for checking on their boy and send him on his way.

Rozanov blinks.

David blinks. He glances at Shane, who doesn't look like *he's* blinked at all.

"Hollander," Rozanov says in a low voice. Slowly. Carefully.

"I don't care," Shane says, and his voice cracks, breaks in his throat, and *that's* why he looks like he hasn't blinked, because he's *crying*. His eyes are glistening, tears threatening to spill, and David distantly hears Yuna make a soft sound. "Come here. Please?"

That *please*. David's never heard Shane sound like that, voice weak and pitiful like he's begging. Pleading.

Yuna says Shane's name softly, and Hayden turns a little toward the bed again like he's going to put his hand on him, and Rozanov exhales.

David hears it, the soft rush of his breath like a sigh, and then he looks back at him just as Rozanov moves, stepping away from the door in a rush. Hayden makes a sound of protest, a startled *Hey*, and Rozanov doesn't seem to hear it, because he's pushing David aside gently, muttering a quiet *Excuse me*, and Shane is reaching up with his only functioning arm, and Rozanov is sitting on the bed next to Shane's legs, and

they're hugging.

Shane's arm wraps around Rozanov's neck tightly, and his face is hidden, tucked between Rozanov's neck and his own arm. Rozanov's arms wrap around Shane in a way that looks almost tender.

Actually, David thinks, eyes scanning over their embrace, not *almost* tender.

Tender. It *is* tender.

Rozanov's hand slides up Shane's back, holds the back of his neck, tucks into his hair, and his head is down too, buried in Shane's neck.

They're swaying a little, rocking back and forth so slowly David doesn't notice it at first, not until he hears Shane sniffle.

He doesn't remember the last time he saw Shane cry.

He didn't cry much when he was young, even when he was a toddler, bumping and bonking into walls and furniture as he got his footing, his centre of gravity wonky. He didn't laugh much either then, like he was too focused, concentrating.

But now, he's crying. Sniffing into Ilya Rozanov's shoulder, letting him cradle the back of his head.

David tears his eyes away, looks up at his wife. She's staring, wide-eyed, lips parted, and her eyes are glistening. David thinks briefly about how beautiful she is.

He looks at Hayden, whose face is contorted in perplexion, eyebrows drawn, eyes wide, nose wrinkled a bit. David's always thought the Hollander-Rozanov rivalry was more of a Pike-on-behalf-of-Hollander-Rozanov rivalry.

"You scared me," Rozanov says. His voice is muffled. His fingers curl into Shane's hair, stroking his head.

"M sorry," Shane chokes.

"Mm." Rozanov pulls away, lifts his head, and he looks at Shane intently. He looks angry, face tense, but he touches Shane's face so softly he's barely touching him at all. Tender. He runs his thumb over Shane's cheek, brushes the backs of his fingers over it. "No apology."

They fall quiet again. David glances at Yuna, then Hayden, and he looks back at the boys on the bed. They look small, holding each other close like they've forgotten that there are others in the room at all. Shane holds Rozanov's shoulder. Rozanov touches his face again.

"Does it hurt?" Rozanov asks.

"Not right now," Shane whispers. "I'm a little high."

"You look more than little high."

It makes Shane laugh, *giggle*, and then Shane falls forward against Rozanov, pressing his forehead to Rozanov's cheek.

Rozanov exhales shakily, running a hand over Shane's head.

"Sorry, what the fuck is going on right now?" Hayden bursts. It startles them all judging by the way both Shane and Rozanov jump, the way Yuna gasps, but Shane doesn't lift his head.

"Can we..." He trails off, mumbling. "Can we talk later?"

"Who are you talking to?" David asks just as Yuna is taking a breath to speak.

“Just... Just in general,” Shane says, voice so light it sounds forced. “I don’t really feel like...”

The room falls quiet again.

“Yeah,” David says, glancing at Yuna and Hayden again. “That’s okay, we can talk later. Don’t worry about it.”

Shane just groans quietly, moving to press his face into Rozanov’s neck.

“Do you want us to give you a minute?” Yuna asks. Her voice is soft.

“Mm.”

“Yeah?”

“Yes, please.”

David looks at Rozanov. He’s looking down resolutely, like he’s scared of meeting any of their gazes. He’s still got a hand in Shane’s hair, combing through it like he’s done it before, like it’s natural.

“That’s okay,” David says. He puts a hand on Yuna’s back, prompting her toward the door. “We’ll check in later, okay?”

“Mhmm.”

Rozanov finally looks up as Yuna makes her way to the door, putting an arm around Hayden, who probably wouldn’t move if it was up to him. Rozanov’s eyes meet David’s, and he looks... terrified.

David is reminded that he’s a kid. In his twenties, same as Shane, and if this is what it looks like, if he and Shane are what they look like right now, pressed together and holding on like they’ll float apart if they let go, maybe Rozanov does have reason to be scared.

David nods at him, doing his best to convey *I won’t tell, don’t worry, kid*. He’s not sure if Rozanov’s replying nod means he got it.

Doesn’t really matter. He won’t tell.

He drags Hayden out with him.

“Fuck, Hollander.”

“Mm.”

Shane rubs his nose against the side of Ilya’s neck, groaning quietly.

“‘M sorry,” he mumbles. “They know, don’t they?”

“I think... I think your parents do,” Ilya says quietly. His mouth is so close to Shane’s ears. “I think Hayden’s tiny brain cannot, uhm. Comprehend?”

Shane huffs out a laugh, warm on Ilya’s skin. Ilya closes his eyes.

“Such an asshole.”

“Mm.”

Shane lifts his head after a moment, squinting at Ilya’s face like he’s trying to memorise it.

“I’m sorry,” he says quietly. “I didn’t mean to— to out you, I just...”

He stops. His lip wobbles. His eyes shine.

“I really need you right now,” he says. His voice breaks, high in his throat and thin. “I just...”

“I am here,” Ilya says seriously, moving to cradle Shane’s face, watching the way he melts into Ilya’s palms, eyes fluttering shut. “I am here, sweetheart.”

Shane exhales roughly. A tear escapes his eye, falling to Ilya’s fingers. Ilya clicks his tongue, eyebrows furrowing.

“Baby...”

Shane’s eyes open, gleaming and dark. His pupils are blown.

“Call me that again,” he whispers softly. Ilya’s stomach aches. He leans in and presses their foreheads as gently as he can.

“Baby,” he breathes. “My baby.”

Shane makes a weak noise, a whimper in the back of his throat, and he shifts, nudging his nose against Ilya’s.

“Kiss me.”

“Shane,” Ilya tries. There’s a window behind him, but really, he should have already cared about that— their noses are rubbing, their faces pressed, hands cradling each other, and it’s obvious. Even Hayden could figure it out.

“I’m not— I’m not trying to start anything,” Shane says. “I know my— my parents are outside and I have a fucking concussion, I just... Please, Ilya.”

Ilya exhales sharply, and he can’t refuse him when he’s like this, all pitiful and teary-eyed. Not that he can refuse him normally anyway. All he has to do is look at Ilya with those pretty brown eyes and Ilya is a dog on a leash.

He kisses him. Softly, carefully, slowly. Shane leans closer, hand sliding to Ilya’s neck, and Ilya squeezes his eyes shut, because they’re starting to burn.

He gasps when they part.

“You are okay,” he says quietly. Shane nods, rubbing his nose along Ilya’s.

“I’m okay.”

“Are you hurting?”

“Not right now,” Shane says softly. “I’m just... I’m kinda scared.”

Ilya nods, pulling away to look at him, to cradle his face and gaze into his eyes.

“I have a concussion,” Shane chokes, crying again. “What if I get another one? What if I can’t play anymore? What if I—“

“Stop, stop,” Ilya murmurs, shaking his head, wiping a tear from Shane’s cheek. “Stop.”

Shane exhales slowly, looking at Ilya’s eyes intently, steadily, and Ilya nods.

“You are okay,” he says firmly. “And you *will be* okay, yes? You will not take stupid risks, and you will take care of yourself so you can recover.”

“Okay,” Shane says softly.

“You will keep playing until you are like dirt, yes?”

“Like dirt?” Shane says, tilting his head like a curious dog. Ilya’s heart clenches.

“Yes, elderly?”

“Old as dirt?” Shane says, cracking a beautiful smile. Ilya might combust. Everything in his body aches like it’s trying to contain it all.

“Da, see?” He combs a hand through Shane’s hair, smoothing it to the side. “Your brain still works. Still too smart for me.”

Shane scoffs, shaking his head, and Ilya kisses him briefly.

“You will be fine,” he says lightly. “You know how many players have had concussions? If one was all it take, we would all be dropped like flies.”

“You’re really liking the metaphors today, huh?”

“That is word for it?”

“Mhmm.”

“Meta-phor. That is good word. You teach me things even with puddle brain.”

Shane’s face melts into a smile. He slumps a little, falling toward Ilya, who kisses him again.

“Can you stay here?” Shane asks. Ilya looks at him.

His eyes are drifting shut, and he’s turning his face into Ilya’s hand like he wants to hide in it.

“I told the guys I wouldn’t be here for long time,” Ilya says, watching his cheek squish against Ilya’s palm. Shane whines.

“Was it true about Marleau?” he asks, eyes cracking open.

“Yes,” Ilya says, nodding. “He feels really bad. He says he does not want to fuck up your career.”

“S nice.”

“He is surprisingly nice,” Ilya says with a shrug.

Shane looks at him for a few moments. His eyes get hazy, unfocused, and for a moment Ilya’s stomach falls and he tilts his head down to look at him intently, searching for his pupils to compare their sizes. But Shane takes a breath, blinking.

“Idea,” Shane announces. Ilya grins, nodding a quiet go-ahead. “Uh. Lie to them—“

Ilya interrupts with a snort, and Shane’s face lights up like it was his goal to make Ilya laugh.

“Tell them there was traffic,” Shane says, almost whining. “Or that my parents wouldn’t let you in to see me. Or you got in a fight with Hayden.”

“That would not help our teams get along,” Ilya points out. “One of my guys put you in hospital, and I am showing sportsmanship.”

Shane makes a face, sticking out his tongue. Ilya refrains from kissing him about it.

“Tell them I was high and wouldn’t stop talking to you.”

Ilya tilts his head.

“That is not lie.”

Shane pokes Ilya’s ribs, and Ilya laughs, catching his hand. It’s a little cold.

“Are you cold?” Ilya asks, drawing his hand closer to himself, cradling it. Shane lets their fingers twist together.

“A little,” Shane says with a shrug. “‘S fine.”

“Uh, no,” Ilya disagrees, lifting Shane’s hand to his mouth and pressing a kiss to his knuckles. “Is not fine.”

Shane is grinning at him, unabashed, almost glowing with it. Ilya swoons a little.

“I know how you could warm me up,” Shane says, moving his hand to touch Ilya’s chin lightly. Ilya smacks his hand away gently, scoffing.

“You are a menace.”

“That’s not what I meant,” Shane says, giggling like that was absolutely what he meant, already reaching for him again. Ilya lets him. “I *meant*, you could hold me.”

Ilya looks at him. Lets him touch his face like he’s tracing the lines of his veins under his skin. He looks so sweet when he’s like this, relaxed and tired, inhibitions lowered.

“Will you hold me?” Shane asks softly.

Ilya’s chest tightens. He has to swallow a lump in his throat before he can speak.

“Da,” he says quietly. “Yes. Of course. Come here.”

He moves closer, drawing a leg up onto the bed with his foot hanging off as Shane smiles brightly, leaning toward him. It takes a moment for them to get situated, for Shane to relax against Ilya’s chest in a way that doesn’t strain anything or put pressure on anything. Ilya’s arms find their places around him, cradling him as his face tucks into Ilya’s neck.

“Okay?” Ilya asks softly, brushing his fingers through Shane’s hair, tilting his head to let him nuzzle.

“Mm.” Shane sighs, melting some more. “I like it when you hold me like this. ‘S so nice.” He presses his face into Ilya’s neck. Ilya feels his nose smush. “You’re so nice. You’re such a nice person.”

“No one will believe you,” Ilya says, letting his head fall to rest on Shane’s, pressing his nose into his hair.

“They don’t have to,” Shane says lightly. “I don’t care what they think. I know that you’re—you’re nice, and you’re sweet, and you take care of me...”

Ilya is quiet. He listens to Shane’s voice trail off, listens to him take a slow breath like he’s meditating. Ilya closes his eyes.

He knows at any second, Shane’s parents could come back, could realise that they’ve left their injured son in a room with his biggest rival, could decide to kick Ilya out on his ass. Or

a nurse or doctor could come in, or even Hayden fucking Pike, which could potentially be worse than Shane's parents, actually. Ilya doesn't doubt that he wouldn't hesitate to get physical, to grab Ilya and drag him away, even if it hurts him. Which, really, Ilya respects about him. He's glad Shane's best friend loves him, even if it's detrimental to Ilya.

But, even as his mind swirls around the possibilities of the door behind him swinging open, he can't help but slide a hand over Shane's back, tucking under the thin fabric of his hospital gown to touch his skin. It's warm from laying on the bed, but it still feels a little cool to Ilya's touch.

Shane hums softly. He presses closer somehow, and Ilya pushes his whole hand under the fabric, tracing the curve of his spine.

"Ilya-a-a..." Shane sings.

Ilya smiles against Shane's head.

"Yes, Солнышк," he says softly.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Mm. Go ahead."

"I was..." Shane pauses, rubbing his nose along the side of Ilya's neck for a moment before he relaxes again, close enough that his lips brush Ilya's skin. "I was thinking about you—how you go back to Russia every summer."

Ilya blinks his eyes open.

"Yeah?" he says when Shane stops again. "What about it?"

"And, uhm..." Shane pauses. Takes a breath. "I was thinking. Maybe. You don't need to give me an answer right now, right you can— you should think about it."

"What am I thinking about?" Ilya prompts.

"Maybe. Definitely," Shane says firmly, nodding against Ilya's neck. "But maybe, if you want. You should spend the summer with me. Or part of the summer."

Ilya looks at the wall across from them, above the headboard of the bed. It's a plain wall, warm brown wood that's probably not actual wood, like the kind of stuff they use to make the desks in hotel rooms.

"At the cottage. It would be fun," Shane says, insisting, his voice light and almost musical. "We could have a week, or maybe two. We could do this every day. And we could swim in the lake, and we could watch movies, and I'd cook for you, and we could do this all the time."

This.

Ilya thinks about it, eyes unfocusing, the wall blurring until he can't see the fake grain of the wood. He thinks about having this all the time, even if only for a week or two, being able to hold Shane, to cradle him, to listen to him breathe and feel his breath on his skin. To play with his hair and feel the way he melts, to see him first thing in the morning. To hear the sounds he makes when he's waking up, when he stretches and rubs his face. To touch him whenever he wants.

"A-a-and it's really quiet out there," Shane says. "Nobody would bother us, or see us. We would be... completely alone. Together."

He finishes softly, almost whispering.

Ilya's eyes sting, and his throat tightens.

"You can— You can think about it," Shane says when Ilya doesn't say anything. "'S okay. I know it's... it's kind of a lot, you know, it feels like— like a step, or something—"

"Shane," Ilya interrupts softly.

"—but I— I hate to think about you going back to Russia and being miserable, and I want you to— to have fun, and to be happy, and I wanna make you happy. If you let me."

Ilya blinks.

A tear falls down his cheek.

He doesn't remember the last time he cried. He almost cried on his way over here, when he was in a cab, ignoring the driver's attempts to chat about Ilya's accent. His throat had tightened, his eyes had stung, and he'd rubbed his nose and bit his lip and done everything in his power to *not*. He's not a crier. He hasn't been since he was old enough to know better, to be scolded by his father and his brother into growing the fuck up.

"Because I..." Shane is quiet. He brushes his nose over Ilya's neck again. "I really care about you, Ilya."

"Shane," Ilya says finally. He immediately regrets it, because his voice breaks, and Shane realises that Ilya is *crying*. He sits up, turns to look at Ilya with wide, worried eyes, lips parted like he's in awe.

"Ilya," he says softly, breathlessly. "You..."

"Sorry," Ilya chokes, looking away, blinking hard, wiping his cheek roughly, but Shane pulls him back, his arm shifting in its sling like it wants to reach for Ilya. He wipes Ilya's face for him, brushing his knuckles over Ilya's cheek gently. "Sorry."

"No, don't," Shane says, tilting his head to look into Ilya's eyes. "'S okay, you... God, you're so fucking beautiful."

Ilya scoffs, letting out a wet laugh, and Shane's face shines with a smile.

“Sorry, just...” He trails off again, caressing Ilya’s cheek again. “Wow.”

Ilya laughs again, shaking his head, and he reaches for Shane’s face too, cradles his cheek gently.

“Shane.”

“What’s wrong?” Shane says, looking at Ilya intently. “Is it— Is it too much? You can say no, you don’t— you don’t have to, it’s okay, maybe we can— we can FaceTime or— or just call while you’re gone, you know, ‘cause I wanna see you still, and I wanna hear you, and I don’t want you to feel lonely while you’re away, and I—”

Ilya leans in and kisses him softly to shut him up. Shane’s hand slides into Ilya’s hair, fingers tangling in curls. Ilya suppresses a sob, squeezing his eyes shut, sliding a hand to cradle the back of Shane’s head as gently as he can.

“Is okay,” he says when they part, foreheads pressing.

“Ilya...”

“Shane, you...” He stops, sniffing, pulling away just to look at him. His eyes are shining now too, glistening like just looking at Ilya crying is enough to break him. “You are so fucking perfect.”

Shane’s head drops as he laughs quietly, tiredly.

“I’m not trying to have a fucking... *moment* with you,” he says when he lifts his head, smiling. “This is very serious.”

“Very serious,” Ilya repeats, nodding. “Okay.”

“You don’t need to... to have an answer now,” Shane says. “I just... I think it would be really fun.”

“What would we do?” Ilya says, wiping his cheek quickly again. Shane watches, his head tilting like he’s curious before he leans down again, resting against Ilya’s chest. Ilya tugs him a little closer as gently as he can.

“Mmm... We could sleep in. Take naps together. And we could work out together. Or I could watch you work out because you’re hot.”

Ilya scoffs. His cheeks flush with warmth, and he’s glad Shane’s head is down so he can’t see it. It’s stupid that he still affects Ilya like this, still manages to fluster him even after they’ve done this for so long. It’s hot, the idea of Shane just sitting and watching him, sitting on a bench or maybe the floor, eyes scanning Ilya’s muscles, shining with sweat. Maybe he’d touch himself, hand tucked under his pants while Ilya uses the weights.

“We could get drunk,” Shane says lightly. “You could bring that awful vodka you like.”

“Is very good vodka.”

“Whatever. We could just hang out,” Shane says, shrugging. “Without worrying about... sneaking around, or— or people seeing us. We could...”

He falls quiet for a moment, breathing, nudging his nose against Ilya’s neck. Ilya brushes a hand through his hair.

“We could just be normal,” Shane says quietly. “For a little while, instead of... I don’t know. We can just be boys.”

Ilya exhales.

Shane sounds mournful, sad, and Ilya wonders if he grieves what they could have too, if he thinks too much about the possibilities if they weren’t...

Whatever they are.

Famous. Celebrity athletes. Russian, on Ilya’s part. An immigrant, kind of. Almost.

Boys.

Gay.

If they were different, if they were nameless, faceless, if they weren’t recognisable in public and didn’t have their names in magazines and on TV, if they weren’t so fucking passionate. If hockey wasn’t everything to them.

Almost everything.

Really, if Shane asked Ilya to quit, Ilya would do it in a heartbeat.

It scares Ilya, how much Shane means to him, how much Ilya fucking *loves* him, even if he refuses to say it aloud, to use that word. It scares him that Shane drowns out everything, the way he’s taken over Ilya’s entire life.

Ilya doesn’t think he’s ever really cared about hockey the way Shane does. He was good at it, he thinks, so he just... kept going. Kept practicing, kept improving, kept impressing. It was *his*, when he didn’t have anything else.

He was lonely, and tired, and he was sad. His father was cruel and sick, spiralling downward before he was even diagnosed, and his brother was mean, and his mother was dead, but he had hockey.

But Shane Hollander.

The fucking audacity, really, of this guy to walk into Ilya’s life with a friendly smile and a handshake and a comment about how Ilya wasn’t supposed to smoke by that door and to flip Ilya’s entire life inside out. Ilya had been content to be lonely for the rest of his life, to sleep around and get drunk, and high, to play hockey until he can’t anymore. To wither away, to let himself rot like either of his parents. Whichever happens first.

He doesn't want to do that anymore. He enjoys hockey, especially when they're playing the Metros—Shane Hollander is a force to be reckoned with, and he makes it interesting. For all the shit Ilya gives him for being boring, he really isn't. Not on the ice, at least.

But he doesn't want to wither away now. He doesn't want to rot, doesn't want to allow himself to spiral downward and spin out of control, to be the disappointment his father always acted like he already was.

He wants to live now. To see the sunlight and actually appreciate it, to savour it the way he savours Shane's smile.

He tucks his nose into Shane's hair, closing his eyes, sliding his hand over Shane's back to push under the hospital gown again. He hugs him, wraps his arms around him and rocks a little bit. Shane holds onto his forearm, exhaling.

"That sounds nice," Ilya says finally.

"Yeah?"

"Yes," Ilya says. "I... I don't know if we will be able to do that, but..."

Shane hums quietly, and it sounds almost resigned, like he'd been anticipating Ilya's quiet refusal. But Ilya doesn't *want* to refuse him, to refuse *this*—he wants it more than anything, he *really* does.

But the world doesn't work like that. He knows it.

He runs a hand over Shane's hair gently, sighing as he rests his face against the top of his head. Shane hums again. His hand runs over Ilya's arm, sliding to his wrist and tucking under his sleeve like he wants to draw it up and out of the way but the fabric won't move like that.

"I would like that," Ilya says quietly. "To see you at home. To wake up in bed with you."

"Mm."

"And also I would watch you work out too," Ilya adds. It makes Shane giggle, nuzzling into Ilya's neck, and Ilya smiles proudly across the room. "You are very hot, Hollander."

"You say the sweetest things."

They fall quiet. Shane's breathing steadies and slows, warm on Ilya's neck. He's close enough that Ilya can feel the flutter of his eyelashes on his skin, so close he can practically feel his pulse. Ilya's chest tightens, and he squeezes Shane as gently as he can.

"I'm glad you are okay," Ilya whispers.

"Me too," Shane whispers back. "I'm glad you came. Was hoping you'd come."

"Even God could not have stopped me from coming to see you," Ilya says softly, lips catching on strands of Shane's hair.

“Fuck, Ilya,” Shane mutters, pressing his face to Ilya’s neck so hard it feels like it might bruise, like he’s trying to break skin, to leave a permanent mark. It has to hurt— there are bruises on Shane’s face from the visor on his helmet, dusty reddish purple across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. “I love you.”

Ilya blinks.

They both fall silent, and Ilya can feel Shane’s muscles tense, the way he tightens like he’s suddenly scared. Shane inhales sharply, fingers curling into the fabric of Ilya’s sleeve.

“I, uhm...” Shane’s voice is so soft it breaks.

Ilya exhales shakily, pressing his face in Shane’s hair. He can’t see suddenly, his eyes flooded with tears that escape when he squeezes his eyes shut.

He doesn’t remember the last time someone said that to him.

He hates himself for it, but he doesn’t even remember the last time his mother said it to him, if it was one of the times she left to stay at a hospital— which Ilya didn’t actually know at the time, of course, he wasn’t allowed to know that she was unwell— or if it was the night before he found her there, laying with empty pill bottles scattered on the floor. And it’s insane, but Ilya thinks about it for a moment, entering a room to find his mother, still and unbreathing.

He thought she was sleeping for a brief moment, but he’d seen her sleep. She always curled up tight, limbs drawn into herself like she was trying to shrink, trying to take up as little space as possible. But then— she was on her side, her arms were spread, extended like she was reaching for something. It was dark when Ilya opened the door, dark enough that he couldn’t really see anything but the faint outline of her body on top of her blankets. He knew something was wrong.

He didn’t know how to explain it to his father when he left, when he went back downstairs without even turning on the light or calling out to his mother, that he knew something was just *off*. It was too dark, too quiet. Something smelled. He’d been interrogated by Grigori, asked why the fuck he was interrupting him, what could be so important, what did he mean he *doesn’t know*?

Something is wrong with Mama, he’d said.

Of course, he’d followed Grigori upstairs. Hovered behind him when he threw open the door Ilya had closed so carefully. Watched as the light turned on. Saw her.

Ilya remembers all of that. He remembers Grigori going to her, touching her, speaking to her. Remembers seeing Grigori move her, rolling her onto her side, remembers watching her move heavily, her arm falling aside in a way that wasn’t natural. Arms aren’t supposed to move like that. And he remembers being pushed from the room and sent to sit with his brother while his father made some calls. He remembers being confused, and scared, and he remembers his brother being confused and scared too. He’d never seen him like that.

Ilya *doesn't* remember the night before. If his mother had kissed his forehead the way she always did, if she said Я тебя люблю. It's like the next day took everything over. He barely even remembers the funeral.

He doesn't realise he's sobbing until Shane is sitting up, turning around to look at him, and Ilya can't see him at all, can't see whatever expression he's making, can't see his eyes. He feels Shane's hand on his face, brushing over his cheeks, and he hears him murmuring so softly Ilya can't tell if he's actually meaning to speak out loud.

"God, Ilya," he's saying, whispered and hushed. "I love you so much."

And Ilya has to kiss him. He'd die if he didn't.

It's clumsy, and it tastes like salt, but Shane doesn't seem to care. And he doesn't seem to mind the way Ilya keeps gasping, pulling away just enough to whisper desperately back to him.

"Has he... Has he ever said anything about..."

Yuna trails off, glancing at Hayden, whose cheeks are red.

"About *Rozanov*?" Hayden says, voice a little too loud. He glances down the hall when David hushes him. "No. He's never fucking said anything about Rozanov."

Yuna nods absently. She doesn't really know where they're going— she left her purse in Shane's room on the side table, so it's not like she can really go anywhere at all right now— and they find a waiting room after walking in silence for a little bit. Yuna sits heavily, looking at the ground, hands falling to her lap, and David sits next to her. He gives her space, doesn't try to touch her back or her knee like he usually does, and while she's grateful, she can't stand it. She reaches over and grabs his hand up, pulling to herself and setting it on her leg, pressing it down firmly.

"He's never said anything to you guys?" Hayden asks as he's sitting down on Yuna's other side. The seats across from her are too far away, and at least here he can talk quietly.

"No, you know him," Yuna says softly, eyes still trained on the ground.

“We thought he had a crush on some girl he knew in high school and trying to get him to talk about it was like pulling teeth,” David says, and they fall into silence again as the same thought seems to settle over them. That it makes sense. Of course he wouldn’t want to talk about a girl.

Yuna covers her face, setting her elbow on the armrest of her chair as she sighs.

Her stomach aches.

She feels *guilty*, and she doesn’t even really know why— maybe all the shit-talking she’s done over the years, all the things she’s said about Rozanov that Shane, clear in hindsight, laughed off. Agreed with quiet *Yeah, totally*s and *So trues*. God, she’s a terrible mother.

How could she not *see* it?

She supposes Shane’s always tucked his feelings away. When he was nervous about starting school, he never said anything. When the other kids on his hockey team made fun of him, of his eyes or his lunch, he never told Yuna until the coach called her personally. He’s quiet, and he’s private, and really, now that she thinks about it, Yuna doesn’t know as much about him as she should.

He likes hockey, *loves* hockey, and he’s on a macrobiotic diet, but he likes strawberries. They’re one of the few exceptions he makes. He likes ginger ale, and he doesn’t particularly like alcohol in any of its forms. He doesn’t really like parties or press conferences, doesn’t really like any kind of event that puts a lot of eyes on him except for games. He likes yoga, and he likes swimming even though he doesn’t do it very often, and he’s a morning person.

Which Yuna could know just by reading an article or two about him in THN or watching a special about him on E:60.

She thinks he likes red. She doesn’t know if he watches TV, or what his favorite movie is, or if he reads anything other than hockey books. She knows he doesn’t drink coffee because it’s a stimulant, and it’s processed or something, but she doesn’t know if he *likes* it.

“Has he ever mentioned...” David trails off. Pauses. “Seeing anyone?”

“No,” Hayden says, shaking his head. “He’s private, you know, he—“

He stops. Blinks. Looks at the ground like the grey-stained vinyl is speaking to him.

“...Oh.”

“Oh?” David says before Yuna can get anything out. “What’s *Oh*?”

“He...” Hayden rubs his face harshly, groaning quietly. “He was, uhm. Texting someone. We teased him a few times, but we— we mostly left him alone about it, ‘cause...”

Because he’s Shane.

“But he— I *think* he went to meet up with her a few times after games and stuff. He wouldn’t say anything about it, like, where he was going or— or who he was seeing, but...” He shrugs, rubbing his cheek again. “We all assumed it was... her.”

“And you didn’t know anything about her?” Yuna asks, letting her fingers wind with David’s. He squeezes.

“Her name was...” Hayden pauses, looking at the floor intently. “Lily.”

Lily.

L i l y .

Ilya.

Fuck.

Yuna covers her face again, shoulders falling, and she hears David sigh. She’s not disappointed, she’s *not*.

Maybe a little.

It’s *Ilya Rozanov*.

But Shane— her baby, her akachan, her Shane-kun— he’ll always be the priority, even if he brings Rozanov with him.

“Okay,” Yuna says, dropping her hand, taking a breath. “Okay.”

David and Hayden look at her, because she makes the game plan. Always.

“We’re not telling anyone,” she says firmly, gesturing vaguely as she looks at the ground. “This is— This isn’t ours to tell. Nobody knows.”

David and Hayden nod.

“And we love him,” Yuna continues with a resolute nod. “This doesn’t change anything. Right?”

“Right,” David says firmly, as though it was any question.

“He has terrible taste in men,” Hayden says absently, staring at the floor. “But he’s my best friend.”

Yuna nods.

She takes a deep breath, exhaling shakily, and she doesn’t say anything else, because for once, she doesn’t have any further steps in her game plan.

There’s nothing more for her to plan, not without Shane and, now, Rozanov, here to give input. They’re not ready to come out, of course they’re not, and that’s a mountain to scale all

on its own— the consequences of them existing in public, out loud.

It would affect their careers, of course it would— their teams might potentially drop them under the guise of non-compatibility, and Shane is already a pariah, already someone that gets asked too many questions about what it's like to not fit in, about how it feels to be the only Asian-Canadian player in the league, how it feels to be compared to Serena Williams and Tiger Woods. This would destroy him. Yuna knows he hates being asked those questions, hates questions that don't have to do with fucking *hockey*, and *this*...

The cameras. The microphones. The *headlines*.

And, Rozanov is fucking *Russian*. He's not even a US citizen, not as far as Yuna knows, and she's not a fan of the guy, even if he is the second-best hockey player in the league, but she has empathy, has *compassion*. She didn't miss the way Rozanov had looked up at David as they left. He was *scared*. If this gets out, if the world learns that he's gay, or bi, or whatever else, it would change his life, maybe ruin it. Would he be able to ever go home? What if the Bears drop him? He'll *have* to go back to Russia, won't he? Yuna doesn't know enough about the socio-political logistics of being queer in Russia— Would he be arrested? Would he be a national pariah, shunned out of society? What about his family? Yuna knows his father passed away pretty recently— would he ever be able to visit his grave?

Yuna squeezes her eyes shut, rubbing her forehead, and David and Hayden must see it on her face, the sudden rush of despair.

"I'm gonna go get some coffee," Hayden says softly. "Do you guys want anything?"

Yuna shakes her head, but David answers for her.

"Black," he says. "Two sugars."

Yuna listens to Hayden go, and she can't feel it in its entirety right now, not when her chest is so tight, but she loves Hayden Pike. She knows he takes care of her boy, knows that he's Shane's friend, and he's a *good* friend, one who would almost pick a fight in a hospital room to look out for him.

"Hey," David says softly. "Yuna."

"Mhmm."

"Talk to me."

"I feel like a bad mom," Yuna chokes. She's crying now, which she avoids as much as possible, especially in *public*. A photo of her crying during the Voyagers' win for the Stanley Cup went viral, at least on the hockey side of the internet, and she had hated it even though all the posts and comments were sweet.

She ducks her head, covering her mouth, and David moves closer, letting go of her leg to touch her back, running across it gently.

"Honey," he says softly. "You're not a bad mom."

“All the shit I’ve said about Rozanov,” Yuna says, gesturing vaguely, grabbing David’s other hand and holding it tightly. “All the times I’ve tried to set him up with someone and— and asked about...”

She sobs. David leans in and kisses her temple.

“Yuna,” he says quietly, firmly. “You didn’t know. *We* didn’t know. He didn’t want us to know—“

“*Why?*” Yuna chokes, looking up at his blurred face. “Why didn’t he want us to know? Did I do something? Why didn’t he— Why didn’t he feel safe telling me?”

“Yuna,” David says again, shifting so they’re facing each other, sitting on the very edges of their seats. “My love.”

Yuna looks at him, listening intently. She needs this, David’s patient, calm logic. She hasn’t needed it in a while, not like *this*, but she used to need it all the time. She was always scared, always anxious, and really, Cipralex has done wonders for her, but David is like a medication all on his own. The way he talks her down from the ledge of her panic, the way he used to breathe slowly and steadily for her to copy, the way he squeezes her hand hard to make it hurt just enough for her to focus on it.

“It doesn’t matter, not right now.”

Yuna squeezes her eyes shut.

“Okay?” David murmurs, tucking her hair behind her ear gently. “Not right now. Right now, all that matters is that Shane is okay, and we love him.”

Yuna nods, taking a shaky breath.

“And it’s going to be fine,” David continues, nodding almost encouragingly. “We’ll support him, and we’ll help him with whatever he and Rozanov want to do, right?”

“Yes,” Yuna says.

David kisses her softly, caressing her cheek. She sighs into it, savoring the feel of his hand on her face; his skin is always warm, just a little scratchy from calluses and work. He also refuses her offer of lotion, insisting that it makes him feel slimy.

They’re quiet until Hayden returns, holding each other’s hands and ignoring the occasional nurse that walks by. None of them go to Shane’s room. Yuna thinks she would drop them if they did, stalking to waste their time for David to go tell Rozanov to put some space between them. Just in case.

Yuna thinks.

David notices, and he doesn’t seem to like it, but he must know that he can’t stop her, and she can’t stop herself. He runs his thumb back and forth over the side of her hand.

When he's back, Hayden sits again, handing Yuna a floral styrofoam cup. It's warm in her hand. Then he pulls some paper napkins out of his pocket and passes them to her. She lets out a wet laugh and takes them, lifting them to her face.

"Thank you, honey."

She didn't used to say honey. It was a David thing, but that kind of thing rubs off on a person after almost thirty years of marriage and almost forty years of friendship.

"Uhm," Hayden says, turning his knees in Yuna's direction. "For what it's worth, Mrs Hollander..."

Yuna laughs lightly. She's always found it funny when Hayden says something so polite—something like *Hello, Mr and Mrs Hollander*, or like *Can I help you with the dishes?* The first time they had Hayden over to watch a hockey game, they found out about the mouth on the boy.

What the fuck was that call? Fucking bullshit!

He's never had a problem saying *fuck* in front of them, but apparently he'd rather die than call them *David* and *Yuna*.

Maybe that's just the kind of person Shaw draws toward himself. Little terrors that will hold him gently.

"They've never thrown a game," Hayden says firmly, looking Yuna in the eye. "I don't—I don't know how they've been... I found out about Lily a while ago, but I don't know if it's—or if it *was*, like, platonic, or if they..." He trails off, shaking his head, tossing a hand. "I don't know anything about this, or—or about Rozanov, obviously, but they..."

He takes a breath, looking at Yuna.

"They're the most competitive fuckers I know."

David lets out a laugh, and Yuna smiles, shaking her head. Her eyes sting again, and she really loves Hayden.

"Especially with each other," Hayden continues, smiling crookedly. "If they're dating, or in love or whatever, I really don't think it would change the way they play."

Yuna nods.

She hadn't let herself think it, but it was in the back of her mind, and it's comforting to hear Hayden dispel it so easily.

And it makes sense. She thinks Shane could only be with someone who feels the same passion he does, who makes the sport a challenge.

Hayden leaves to see the other guys, to tell them in person that Shane is okay, and that he *will* be okay, and that someone from the Bears came by in a show of sportsmanship. Yuna gives

him a hug and thanks him for the coffee again, and then she and David wait.

She thinks.

She replays it in her mind, the moment Rozanov walked into the room and saw them standing there, the way his eyes widened like he was terrified, the way Shane fell silent and stared, face falling into something hopeful. The way he'd looked at Rozanov, eyes wide and shining, lips parted like he was in awe.

The way he said *Hi*, all soft and sweet and delirious, the way he'd *begged* Rozanov to go to him, crying and reaching up for him like a child.

Yuna's never seen Shane like that.

When they finally work up the nerve to go back to Shane's room, Yuna goes first, pausing to peek through the window.

Rozanov is sitting with Shane resting against him, his arms around him in a way that Yuna can tell is gentle just by looking at him. He's got his head resting on Shane's, and they're so still they look like they're sleeping like that. Yuna pauses to just look, eyes lingering on the contrast of their hair tangled together before she knocks lightly a few times and opens the door.

Rozanov startles a little, lifting his head and looking over at Yuna and David as they enter the room. He's been crying.

Shane is asleep, resting against Rozanov's chest, face pressed into his neck, lips parted as he breathes steadily. He looks so much younger when he's like this, face relaxed and content. Yuna's throat tightens as she looks, and she has to fight back a smile. Rozanov is looking at the two of them, a hand resting on Shane's back gently.

"I, uhm..." Rozanov starts quietly, looking away, down at Shane. "I'll go."

He whispers it, moving slowly, shifting Shane away and off of him, lowering him to lay down properly on the bed. Shane's expression twitches with annoyance, his eyes fluttering open for a moment, but Rozanov stands and leans over him, whispering something as he presses a soft kiss to Shane's forehead. Shane exhales softly, relaxing again.

Rozanov hesitates, standing up straight and smoothing his jacket down awkwardly, glancing between them, and Yuna opens her mouth to speak, to say *something*, but Rozanov turns sharply and leaves, shutting the door quietly behind himself.

Yuna and David stare at the door in silence for a moment before they turn to look at each other. David tilts his head toward the door.

She follows Rozanov out, looking down hallways for him—he's a fast walker, especially, apparently, when he's trying to escape his maybe-boyfriend's mom, but she catches him as he's starting to pass by the waiting room she'd sat in with David and Hayden.

"Rozanov," she calls.

He stops in the middle of the hallway, freezing before he turns around to face her. He's rubbing his cheek, which is red, and he's looking at the ground, avoiding her eyes.

"Can we talk for a minute?" she asks when she catches up. He still won't meet her eyes, pressing his lips together and nodding slowly. She gestures to the waiting space, the chairs lined around the room, and she beckons.

She sits in the corner so he can sit across from her.

It's awkward. Rozanov tucks his hands under his legs with his shoulders hunched, and he looks small like this, nothing at all like the boy Yuna's seen on television and on the ice, grinning and cocky.

"How do you pronounce your name?" Yuna asks.

Rozanov blinks.

"...What?"

"Your name," Yuna says. "I've heard it on television and from commentators and reporters, but most of them are Canadian or American, and they can't pronounce anything right."

Rozanov lets out a laugh like he's startled, and Yuna smiles.

"Ilya Rozanov," he says, lips twitching into a smile when she stares at him before he repeats it slowly. She repeats after him, watching the way his smile stretches, the way his expression brightens. "Yes, Ilya is— is two syllables, not three like they say."

"Got it," Yuna says, nodding. "I'm Yuna."

Rozanov— *Ilya*— looks at the ground again, nodding. He's so young.

"So you and Shane are..." She trails off, looking at him as he looks up at her, cheeks a brilliant shade of pink. His eyes flicker back and forth between hers like he's looking for something, and then he nods.

"Yes," he says softly.

Yuna nods.

"How long?" she asks lightly. He hesitates, rubbing his face again.

"Uhm. Maybe since... rookie year?" Yuna blinks before her eyes go wide, and Ilya looks away again. "But it was not— It was, uhm. Casual."

Yuna nods slowly, and Ilya's face suddenly flushes with color, bright red, as he looks away, clapping his hands over his face.

"I should not say that to you," Ilya says, voice muffled by his hands. "I am so sorry."

Yuna laughs brightly, reaching out to rub his shoulder.

“S okay, we’ve all had a day.”

He laughs awkwardly, nodding.

“It’s not very casual anymore, is it?” Yuna asks. Ilya shakes his head, lips pursing a little.
“...Do you love him?”

“Yes,” Ilya says without even pausing for a breath. “I do, very much.”

Yuna suppresses a smile, watching him nod, and her chest feels warm. She believes him.

“Have you guys talked about... the future?” she asks. “What you guys might do?”

“No,” Ilya says, shaking his head. “We have not talked about anything. I think it... It is a lot to think about. Kind of depressing.”

Yuna smiles sadly, nodding.

“It is complicated,” Ilya says softly. “I think everything about... us. It makes it all more complicated.”

Yuna nods again, and she fights back the urge to wrap her arms around him—it’s a strange urge to feel, the desire to hug Ilya Rozanov like he’s her own son.

“What about your family?” she asks. “I heard about your father, but...”

Ilya shakes his head, eyes on the ground.

“I do not have family.”

“...None?” Yuna asks. He shakes his head again, and it breaks her fucking heart, the way he somehow looks twelve years out and a hundred years old at the same time.

“I have... I have a brother,” Ilya cedes, glancing at her. “But he is an asshole, and I have... cut him out. He has a daughter, I have trust fund for when she is older. She is baby still.”

Yuna nods. There’s a soft glimmer of fondness on his face, and her heart somehow squeezes a little more.

“And your mother?” she asks before she regrets it immediately, because Ilya’s eyes cut up to her, and she can barely even recognize the shine in them.

“She is dead,” Ilya says bluntly.

Yuna looks at him, exhaling sharply.

“I’m sorry, honey,” she says quietly.

He shakes his head dismissively, grimacing, scrunching his nose up, but then his eyes are gleaming, and a tear falls down his cheek, and he turns away with a choked, "Sorry."

Yuna shakes her head, reaching for his arm again and rubbing his shoulder.

"I have been—" Ilya lets out a choked laugh. "I have been thinking about her a lot lately."

"Do you wanna tell me about her?" Yuna asks, and she doesn't know if she can handle it, this little boy's grief in a man so seemingly invincible.

"I, uhm..." Ilya trails off, and Yuna leaves her hand on him, squeezing gently. "I think about her when I am scared, or— or lonely. And I think about her when I am happy." He pauses, glancing up at her with a weak smile, eyes teary. "And Shane makes me very happy. So I have been... happy-sad."

Yuna smiles, nodding.

"Grief does that."

"Yes," Ilya says, nodding in agreement. "I hate it."

Yuna laughs lightly, and she looks at him. He looks at the ground, eyelashes fluttering as he tries to blink tears back unsuccessfully. They fall down his cheeks, glistening on his skin, and he looks somehow simultaneously achingly empty and so full of *something* that it hurts. He's almost wincing, eyebrows drawn like he has a stomachache or sore muscles.

She squeezes his arm when he looks up at her, tears falling down his cheeks.

"She would have loved him," he whispers brokenly, smiling a little. "Like I love him."

Yuna's chest splits in half, dividing like a fault line, and she wants to take this boy home, wants to wrap him in a blanket and keep him forever.

"Honey," she murmurs, sliding her hand over to his back and moving closer to wrap him in a half-hug.

"I found her," Ilya chokes, covering his face again. "And when I saw Shane, I just..."

He breaks off with a weak sob, squeezing his eyes shut, and Yuna moves to wrap her arms around him, closing her eyes as he falls against her. His hand lifts to clutch at her arm desperately, and she never thought she'd be here, consoling a grieving and tired Ilya Rozanov, but really, she doesn't think she'd rather be anywhere else.

"I was so scared," Ilya says, his voice muffled by Yuna's arm.

"I know, honey."

"He was not moving."

“I know,” Yuna says again. Her voice breaks too, choked off by the tightening of her throat. “I know, it was scary.”

She waits for him. Holds him. Runs a hand over his hair and rocks him back and forth a little like he’s a little boy. He’s talking, muttering in clumsy Russian under his breath, and Yuna doesn’t understand a word, of course she doesn’t, but she doesn’t think she really has to. She gets it.

“He’s okay,” she whispers when Ilya falls quiet. “He’s gonna be okay.”

Ilya nods, sniffing.

“He is okay,” he repeats quietly, whispering like he’s saying it to himself, committing it to memory. “He is okay.”

“He’s getting rest right now,” Yuna says, petting a hand over Ilya’s hair. “And he’s going to recover, and then he’s going to get back on the ice and kick your asses—”

Ilya interrupts with a burst of laughter, ducking his head to wipe his face, and Yuna grins.

“He is just like you,” Ilya says lightly, shaking his head as he finally sits up, lifting a sleeve-covered hand to his cheek and wiping it roughly, leaving it reddened. “I can see it now.”

“Should I take that as a compliment?” Yuna questions. Ilya smiles, lifting a shoulder in a half-shrug.

“Well, I am in love with him, so.”

Yuna’s face lights up.

She loves Shane, and she’s proud of him for everything, of course she is— but *this*, knowing how much someone loves him, even if it’s Ilya Rozanov, it’s different.

She did okay with him. She must have if someone can love him like this, enough to out himself to three people who don’t like him, and don’t trust him. Enough to hold him so gently while he cries and while he sleeps, enough to lay him down and kiss his forehead and murmur something softly enough that he goes back to sleep.

“A compliment, then,” she says softly. He nods. They’re quiet for a moment, and Yuna looks at him. He looks pitiful, cheeks pink, eyes red, eyelashes clumped with tears, looking at the ground with his hands tucked in his lap again like he’s tiny. He’s so young, too young to carry so much grief. “You should get some rest, hon.”

He nods absently, sniffing, reaching to rub his cheek.

“Yes,” he says softly before he blinks like he’s trying to ground himself. “I will feel better tomorrow.”

“Do you need help getting to your hotel?”

“No, I... I will be okay, I will get Uber.”

“Okay.”

They stand. Ilya rubs his face some more, taking a shaky breath, wiping under his eyes even though there aren't any more tears.

“Ilya,” Yuna says softly. He stops short, looking up at her like he's forgotten that she knows his name, that she knows how to say it. “Will you give me your phone number?”

He blinks, eyes dropping to where she's already holding her phone out, and he nods hesitantly, taking it from her to type his number in with shaky hands. He pauses to look over it, checking, before he hands it back to her, and she looks at it.

“Should I put you down as Lily?”

He blinks, staring at her blankly before he looks down the hallway, eyebrows furrowing.

“*Hayden.*”

Yuna laughs brightly, and she can see him fighting a smile, shaking his head like he's disappointed. She is a little amused by the way he calls Hayden by his first name when she doesn't think she's ever heard Hayden say Ilya's. Maybe it's because Shane calls Hayden *Hayden*.

She puts him down as Lily, and she sends him a message so he has her number. She hears his phone chime quietly in his pocket.

“I'll tell you if anything changes, okay?”

“Okay,” he says quietly. “Thank you.”

She gives him one more hug before he goes, reaching up to smooth her hand over the back of his head, and he lets her, arms wrapping around her hesitantly before they tighten like he can't help himself. It takes a while for them to part, and she thinks she would let him hold her like this for hours if he needed.

She watches him go, and she thinks she loves him. This sweet boy who loves her baby so much she can practically see it.

She sits back down for a few moments, looking at the ground, eyes tracing the lines between the greyed vinyl squares slowly. It's so quiet here, almost silent save for some distant, muffled beeping and rolling of wheels. The lights overhead are buzzing quietly, and Yuna usually hates that kind of thing, but these lights aren't as bad as others are. She can hear herself take a deep breath, exhaling shakily into her hands, and then she stands resolutely and goes to see her baby.

He didn't say it to her, but Ilya can see now why Shane is the way he is.

In a good way, of course.

Ilya calls him boring, but really, he's just nicer than everyone else.

He's nice, and he's kind, and he's sweet to a fault. He's soft-spoken, especially with a microphone held in his face, and he's gentle when he's not on the ice.

Ilya could see it all in his parents, the way Shane's father took initiative to guide his wife and Hayden out of the room, the way he nodded at Ilya like they shared some secret— which, maybe they kind of do— and the way Shane's mother held him. The way she talked to him, the way she rocked him back and forth like he was tiny— something Shane does. The way she ran her hand over his head and murmured to him like he's her own son.

It had made everything worse, the grief, the ache, and longing, but Ilya didn't mind it.

He loves Shane *so much*, but *now*— He doesn't think he's ever wanted anything more than to be a part of this family.

He's still thinking about it as he thanks the driver and gets out of the car, as he walks through the lobby of the hotel with his head ducked, smiling a little at the receptionist, who recognises him.

Marleau is in their shared room, waiting for him. He's sitting in the corner, legs propped up on the ottoman, looking at the ceiling until Ilya walks into the room. It seems to startle him, and he jumps up, standing, looking at Ilya with wide eyes. Ilya freezes, looking at him. He doesn't want to deal with this right now, and he regrets agreeing to a shared room. He wants to take a shower and go to sleep.

"How is he?" Marleau says, eyes searching Ilya's face, and he can definitely tell that Ilya's been crying, which doesn't seem to comfort him. Obviously. "Fuck, is he—"

"He is fine," Ilya says quickly, moving to take off his jacket. "He has a concussion and a fractured..." He gestures to his clavicle, searching. "Collarbone. He will be okay."

"Okay," Marleau says, nodding, exhaling like he's out of breath. "He's out for the playoffs, though."

"Yes," Ilya says with a nod. "Playoffs will be boring."

Stupid.

Stupid, stupid, fucking *stupid*.

Marleau doesn't seem to notice it, moving aside so Ilya can drop his jacket on the lounge chair in the corner after toeing his shoes off.

"What's going on?"

"Nothing is going on," Ilya says, studiously avoiding his eyes as he picks his bag up and opens it to rummage through for his sweatpants. "Is fine."

"Is he actually—"

"He is *fine*, Marly," Ilya says firmly, looking across the bed at him. "You did not kill a man today."

"Okay, then what's..." He trails off, gesturing to Ilya.

"What's what?" Ilya says, tossing a hand. Like it isn't obvious. "There is nothing wrong."

"Okay, well, you've been crying," Marleau says bluntly, no longer skirting around it. "That's fucking *wrong*."

"I am fine."

"Roz."

Ilya looks at him steadily, raising his eyebrows. Marleau looks right back, unwavering, like they're having a staring contest.

"What's going on, man?" he asks after a moment, his voice softening like he's trying to be quiet for Ilya's sake, like he knows he doesn't want anyone hearing this.

"I..." Ilya exhales sharply in frustration, jaw clenching briefly. "I am fine."

But Marleau is unswayed, looking at Ilya like he's trying to read his mind, like he can see through his skull into his brain. And Ilya thinks about it, about sharing this with someone else that he likes. A friend.

They're not like Hayden and Shane—they don't have dinner on weekends or hang out after practice or go to aquariums with Marleau's hundreds of children.

But he is Ilya's *friend*. He knows that.

He *doesn't* know how Marleau feels about queer people. Ilya's never heard him say anything, even when the others say the things that are common in locker rooms. Comments about someone taking it up the ass, someone being a little *sus*, which is a stupid word Ilya learned recently. He didn't think Marleau ever contributed to the conversations.

But if he tells Marleau, then Marleau will know about Shane, and that isn't Ilya's to share, not without talking to him first at least.

Marleau stares into Ilya's soul some more like he knows he's breaking through something, and Ilya looks at his duffle bag on the bed. His chest tightens. He squeezes his eyes shut.

"When I was... When I was a child, I found my mother," he says finally, looking up at Marleau. His face shifts into confusion. "Dead."

Marleau blinks. His expression falls.

He'd known that Ilya doesn't have a mother, not now. It had come up when Grigori died, the fact that the only family Ilya has is his shitty brother and infant niece.

"Okay," Marleau says slowly.

"She was—" He stops short, blinking his stinging eyes. He hasn't cried this much in fucking *years* and he kind of hates it. "She was not moving."

Marleau nods.

"And when I saw Sh— Hollander on the ice today, it just..." He shrugs lightly, taking a breath. "Took me back."

Silence.

Marleau's eyes are wide, and he looks heartbroken, like Ilya's just ripped his chest open.

"...I'm sorry," Marleau breathes.

Ilya shakes his head, tossing a hand dismissively.

"Roz."

It's not the whole truth, of course. But Ilya can't say everything that he thinks, that today he saw the love of his fucking life laying motionless on the ice, that the voices of the crowd and referees became muffled, like he'd just been thrown underwater. That he didn't know what *happened*, didn't know if he was okay, if he was *alive*, and his brain was so loud that he couldn't play for the rest of the game. That he'd sat aside, watching blankly, quietly, tearing up the inside of his cheek with his teeth.

His coach had seen it on him. Not everything, but enough to know that the best move would be to set him aside.

"Roz," Marleau says again. "Ilya."

He doesn't say it right— American. But Ilya finds that right now, he doesn't really give a shit, because he's crying again, breathing hard. He ducks his head, leaning over his duffle bag and holding himself up on it, shoulders by his ears.

"Fuck, dude."

"I'm fine," Ilya chokes, shaking his head again. "Sorry."

“You’re not fine, man,” Marleau says. “That’s fuckin’ *heavy*, Roz, Jesus.”

Ilya laughs weakly. It sends more tears down his face. His chest is tight, and he can’t open his fucking eyes even though all he can see right now is the silhouette of his mother’s corpse.

“Fuck, sorry,” he manages to get out, leaning over farther, pressing his face into his duffle bag for a moment before he pushes himself up to rub his chest like it’ll work to lessen the pressure on it. “Sorry.”

“Don’t say sorry, man, it’s okay.” He hears Marleau pull the duffle bag away, hears him come closer. “What do you...”

He doesn’t know what he needs.

He *wants* Shane. And, he realises, he wants Shane’s family. He wants Yuna to hold him again, and he wants to hear David’s voice say something like *You’re okay*. It’s all so fucking stupid, how desperate Ilya is for some semblance of a family, how badly he wants it.

“Ilya.”

“I don’t know, sorry,” Ilya says breathlessly, shaking his head. “I’m fine, just...”

“...Do you want a hug?”

Ilya pauses, rubbing his chest harshly, squeezing his eyes shut. He can feel

Marleau looking at him.

He nods.

And Marleau doesn’t even hesitate, doesn’t linger for even a moment before he’s rounding the bed and pulling Ilya into his arms. Ilya’s face presses to his shoulder.

“Tighter?” Marleau asks softly. “Or looser?”

“Tighter,” Ilya chokes, arms wrapping around Marleau’s waist. Marleau squeezes, pulling him closer, and they sway a little. “Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Marleau says quietly, gently. “I know.”

He doesn’t know. He has no fucking idea. But Ilya doesn’t need him to know right now.

“Just breathe,” Marleau murmurs. “I got you, man.”

Ilya buries his face in Marleau’s shoulder, squeezing his eyes shut. He can feel Marleau rubbing his back gently, can hear him breathing, can feel the rise and fall of Marleau’s chest against his own, and he *feels* it. Focuses on it.

His breathing slows gradually, and he relaxes against Marleau, who lets him.

It’s kind of nice.

“He’s okay, right?” Marleau says after a few moments, voice hushed like he’s conscious that Ilya’s ear is so close. “And he’s gonna be fine?”

He’s saying it just for Ilya’s sake, but part of Ilya wonders if he’s saying it for himself too, to ease some guilt.

“Yes,” Ilya says quietly.

“You talked to him?”

“Yes,” he says again, nodding. “He was high on pain killer.”

Marleau laughs a little, chest jumping against Ilya’s, and they finally part. It’s slow, a little awkward, but Ilya doesn’t really mind it. He’s too tired.

“What’s he like high?” Marleau asks.

“Kind of cute,” Ilya says before he can stop himself. He glances at Marleau’s face, gauging a reaction, but he just laughs again, brightening with a smile.

“Chatty?”

“Very, yes,” Ilya says with a nod, rubbing his cheek roughly, turning back to his duffle bag. “He would not let me leave.”

He pauses, glancing at the sweatpants in his hand, and he really is tired. He hasn’t cried in ages, hasn’t cried *four times* in *one day*, hasn’t had *two* panic attacks in *one day*. He’s fucking *exhausted*. Everything hurts, aches, and his head is sore. He should drink water.

He can’t be bothered to take a shower. He took a quick one after the game, rushing to get to the hospital. He can take one in the morning.

“He seems like he’d be a sweetie when he’s high,” Marleau says lightly. “I’ve heard him chirping on the ice.”

Ilya can’t help but laugh, nodding his head.

“He is sweet even without drugs,” he says.

“Aren’t you guys supposed to hate each other?” Marleau asks, collapsing onto his bed and watching as Ilya changes, tugging his shirt off and pulling on a hoodie that smells like laundry detergent.

“Is hard to hate somebody like Hollander,” he mutters.

“S true,” Marleau says. “I don’t know if I’d feel so bad if it was anyone other than Hollander.”

Ilya laughs again.

“I’m, uhm. I’m going to go to sleep,” he says quietly. “I am very tired.”

“That’s cool, man,” Marleau says. “Most of the guys aren’t going out tonight anyway.”

Ilya just nods.

He doesn’t speak again, quiet for the night, and Marleau leaves him alone, scrolling on his phone in silence. Ilya brushes his teeth, and he turns off the lights, and he climbs into bed, facing the wall.

He can hear Marleau on his phone, fingertips tapping quietly on the screen as he types something, clicking the volume button repeatedly when a video plays out loud for a brief moment. He can hear him breathing, can hear his leg shifting back and forth over his blankets, can hear the air conditioner and someone’s footsteps upstairs.

He buries his face in his pillow, laying on his front to wrap his arms around it, and he wishes he was with Shane, wishes he was cradling him and listening to his heartbeat, wishes he was kissing him better. Maybe he can somehow evade the flight tomorrow— if he pretends to be sick, or pretends to run late— and he can go see him again. If Yuna is still there maybe she’ll hug Ilya again. And if Shane isn’t still on Mars, maybe Ilya can talk to him about potentially telling Marleau about them.

He’s too tired to figure it out. He’s too tired to think anything but *Shane*.

So he allows sleep to take him, tucking his hand into his neck with his knuckles pressing firmly into his skin like Shane’s face is still tucked there where it belongs. He pretends he can feel Shane’s breath on his skin. But his phone vibrates on the nightstand, and he reaches for it before he can even register it. He squints, drawing the phone to his face to scan the only notification on the screen before it’s followed by another.

Yuna: Lily, you should know that he’s woken up and is already asking where you’ve gone. Any chance you’ll be able to come see him again tomorrow?

Yuna: Hope you’re getting some rest. Let me know if there’s anything David and I can do to support you. 😊

Ilya falls asleep with his fingers around his phone, phone tucked under his pillow.

End Notes

this was supposed to be a one-scene drabble.

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