in the air tonight

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in the air tonight

by Yoitsmo16

Summary

Last night had been the bachelors' party. And what a night it had been, what Ilya could remember of it.

Notes

For the "ESPN Body Issue" square of server bingo. TLG spoilers abound, and is canon compliant up until chapter 37.

Born from a discord conversation involving the movie The Hangover. I encourage little to no logic while reading this.

Chapter 1: waking up in vegas

Sunlight and general consciousness slowly trickled into Ilya's head. Everything. Hurt. The sun was trying to kill him. His head pounded to the beat of some unknown EDM song. His cheek was against something… not a pillow, but not carpet either. He put a hand to the ground to brace himself and slowly, very slowly, sat up. Whatever his head was lying on was now attached to his cheek, feeling damp and heavy with the pull of gravity. He reached up and peeled it away from his face like the face peel Svetlana once convinced him to try. It was a… magazine? He turned it and found a naked, silhouetted Shane Hollander on the cover of ESPN The Magazine, looking fierce in the follow-through of a slap shot. He adored this cover of The Body Issue, but he did not expect to sleep and drool on it. The turn of the pages was harshly loud as he found his other favorite photo: the one of Shane and him taking a face-off with only hockey sticks in hand. They were both in profile and clever shadow lighting hid certain bits while also illuminated muscles like biceps, obliques, and quads.

He was going to marry Shane Hollander today. They had been engaged for a little over a year, deciding to take things slow while they got used to being an out couple, then especially an out couple who were also teammates. They had been thinking about getting married after the first season playing together on the Centaurs, but things had gone so well in the first few months of the season that they decided to speed up the timeline. They were taking advantage of the All Star Weekend in Vegas, and an additional few days off following it, to quickly get married mid-season. A long honeymoon and a large reception-like party during the off-season sounded like bliss to Ilya.

Last night had been the bachelors' party. And what a night it had been, what Ilya could remember of it.

He finally started to get his bearings and glanced around the room. This looked like *a* hotel room, but not *his* hotel room. His and Shane's room, that was. The spacious, well-appointed room had a distinct Grecian vibe to it. Was it possible they were in Caesar's Palace? He smiled to himself as he remembered walking by the hotel yesterday afternoon and Hayden genuinely asking if the real Julius Caesar had lived there.

As if on cue, a thud sounded to Ilya's left as a body rolled off a couch onto the floor. Hayden Pike whipped his head up and blearily looked around, seeming to find offense in everything he saw.

"What the? Where are we?" Hayden asked.

"Caesar's Palace, I think," Ilya replied and Hayden ducked his head in pain.

"Do you have to yell at me?"

"You're the one who yelled at me," Ilya rubbed his eyes.

"What the hell happened last night," Hayden said, rather than asked, with awe.

Ilya caught sight of multiple empty vodka bottles. The good stuff. Damn Vegas and its sourcing of excellent vodka.

The sound of a body hitting a door or a piece of furniture somewhere in the suite came before an "Ah, shit!" made Ilya and Hayden wince. Troy Barrett walked in rubbing his hip. "Oh, hey guys, have you seen my phone?" he asked with much more normalcy than the other two were feeling.

"No," Ilya replied in a monotone voice. Come to think of it, he hadn't seen his yet, either. He gingerly stood up and started looking around the room, but not a single smartphone was in sight. In fact, the room didn't seem to be very lived in. Bottles in the kitchen area seemed to be the only items of theirs present. Assuming Shane would have still been coherent enough last night to choose to sleep in a bed rather than on the floor, he asked "Was Shane back there with you, Barrett?"

Troy thought for a second before replying, "No, I was alone."

Ilya felt slight panic as he started searching the many rooms of the suite searching for Shane.

"I gotta take a piss," Hayden said as he shuffled towards a closed bathroom door. He opened the door and peeked in before yelping in fright. He slammed the door and backed away.

Ilya ran back to the main room. "What is it?" he cried.

"There's a…" Hayden looked legitimately scared at the bathroom door.

"A what?"

"A… a… rabbit in there!"

Ilya threw his hands in the air. This was *not* what he needed right now. "Why the fuck is there a rabbit in the bathroom? And why are you terrified of it?"

"I don't know why it's there!" Hayden exclaimed. "I just… Jackie's shown me like two movies where there's scary rabbits. Do you understand what they're capable of?!"

Ilya flashed him a sardonic look. "Troy, can you help Hayden with the rabbit?" Troy leapt into action, leaving Ilya to search yet again for Shane.

Shane wasn't there. It was their wedding day and Shane wasn't with him. He started to earnestly look for a smartphone, anyone's would do. He gripped the back of the couch and watched as Hayden and Troy emerged from the bathroom, a large white rabbit tucked in Troy's arms. "All good," Troy said. "A nice, non-murderous bunny."

Hayden glared at the back of Troy's head and mumbled "You don't *know* that for sure."

"Guys," Ilya said with all seriousness. "Shane isn't here. Does anyone have their phone?"

Everyone looked around and patted their pockets in vain. Nothing. "Is there a regular phone in the room somewhere?" Troy asked.

Ilya snapped his fingers and pointed at Troy. “Good idea, Barrett.” He looked around and spotted a hotel phone on a side table embellished to look like a small Grecian column. He picked up and immediately dialed Shane’s number.

“You know his number? Damn,” Hayden loudly whispered, clearly impressed. Troy nodded in agreement.

Ilya rolled his eyes as the phone rang and rang on the other end. Each ring increased his worry. He started at the “Hi, you’ve reached Shane Hollander…” but grunted in frustration at the realization it was just Shane’s voicemail. He hung up, then realized he should’ve left a message. Repeating the whole process again, the rings seeming hollow at this point, he was finally able to leave a message. “Shane, it’s me. Troy, Hayden, and I just woke up in a room at Caesar’s Palace. We don’t have our phones, it seems, so we’re just going to make our way back to our actual hotel, I think. Or maybe we’ll figure out what to do with the bunny. Maybe you’re still somewhere we went last night? I don’t know, I just hope I see you soon. If you get this, just be at the hotel for the ceremony tonight. I love you. Bye.”

He hung up the phone and rubbed his face. Hayden and Troy stood watching, unsure of what to do. Ilya started to pace and rub his hands together. “Okay, we have no phones, a bunny, what’s our wallet situation?” Everyone searched and found their respective wallets with all contents intact. “Okay,” Ilya resumed. “We went to dinner, that first bar, and the karaoke bar all together with Shane. Things get fuzzy for me during the Magic Mike show. What about you guys?”

Troy nodded. “Same for me. I remember Hazy walking with us to the show and then bouncing. But Shane was definitely still with us.”

“I, uh…” Hayden scratched the back of his head. “I kind of remember leaving the karaoke bar. That’s it though.”

Ilya audibly sighed. “Okay, let’s head over to the Magic Mike theater and see if a host or someone can help us on the timeline. When we left, what our plan was, that kind of thing.”

“Okay, yeah, sounds good,” Hayden replied.

Troy held up the cradled rabbit in his arms. “What about Mr. Nibbles?”

“Bring him along, I guess,” Ilya said. “Maybe he belongs with the show. Was there a legit magic part? I don’t know. Either way, he needs to go somewhere.” He glanced at the clock. “Let’s get going, it’s almost eleven.”

They prepared what little they had and made to leave. Troy was excited to find some carrot sticks in the fridge (“drunk us still thought to feed him, nice”) and was began feeding them to Mr. Nibbles. As they were walking out, Hayden quickly snatched up the ESPN Body magazine and ripped the front cover off. As he was folding the paper, he looked up and met Ilya’s “what the hell?” gaze and gesture.

“In case we have to, like, show someone what he looks like! Or we have to make lost posters or something,” Hayden said defensively. Ilya rolled his eyes and waved Hayden out of the

suite.

Once they reached the lobby, Ilya stopped and turned to the others. “Guys, if at any point you remember something from last night, tell us. Anything at all.” They all glanced around, hoping the sights would trigger a memory. “Okay let’s go.”

He turned to leave, but Hayden remained standing. “Wait!” he shouted and met up with them. “How are we gonna get into the show? Do you just walk in and ask a manager or something?”

Ilya put his hands on his hips in thought. His gaze drifted to the side where a gift shop was just visible around the corner. He leaned to gain a better view of the shop and spotted a rack of black leather pants. “I’ve got an idea.”

Meanwhile…

Shane waited for his smoothie at the little Straw + Berry kiosk in the breakfast area of their hotel. Wedding day smoothie. His workout that morning was his wedding day workout. Followed by wedding day shower. Later he was having his wedding day lunch with his parents, then a wedding day haircut. He was glad Ilya had convinced him to leave his phone in the room for the day and just be in the moment.

Said moment was interrupted by Wyatt Hayes’ hand clapping on Shane’s shoulder. “Hey, found a groom!” he said jovially.

“Hey Hazy,” Shane said with a smile.

“Today’s the big day! How are you feeling?”

Shane nodded with a nervous smile. “Uh, good, yeah. Kinda wish it was happening in a few minutes, not a few hours.”

Wyatt nodded understandingly. “Been there.”

“One Blue Moon Over Brooklyn!” called the smoothie employee. Shane stepped forward and took it with a quick thanks.

“Wanna walk outside?” Shane asked. At Wyatt’s agreement, they walked out to the large pool area and settled on some lounge chairs in the shade.

“So,” Wyatt started. “Anything interesting happen last night?”

Shane shrugged. “Not really, we went to the Magic Mike show which was, you know, fun. Channing Tatum was there as a surprise. I couldn’t hang with the guys after that, had to come back. Good thing too, I think I was one more drink from a black void.”

“What did Roz say this morning?” Hazy asked.

“Dunno. He insisted before I left that we not see each other until the ceremony today. Said he’d stay with Troy probably.”

“I like it, I didn’t see Lisa until a first look type of thing. We did a little gift exchange. She gave me some sweet Green Lantern socks that I immediately switched into.”

“And you gave her…?”

“A stethoscope with a little engraving. She didn’t want to wear it with her dress, unfortunately,” he said with a joking sigh.

“Those are great,” Shane grinned and his smile turned soft as he thought of the “happy wedding day” text he had sent Ilya that morning before going phone-free.

Wyatt happily shared more stories of his wedding day as Shane finished his smoothie. He was grateful for the company and funny anecdotes. He hoped Ilya was having a similar morning, wherever he was in the hotel. He and Wyatt finished up and parted ways - Shane to meet his parents in the lobby and Wyatt to touch base with Lisa after her shift. It was going to be a great day. Shane’s wedding day.

Chapter 2: desperado

Chapter Summary

> “I have some follow-up questions on you being so comfortable in leather, but those will wait for another time.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hayden, if you don’t stop picking that imaginary wedgie,” Ilya chastised as they approached the Magic Mike theater.

“I’m *sorry,* this shit is uncomfortable!” Hayden exclaimed as he avoided reaching for his butt by taking a big step with a wiggle.

“If we have any chance of talking to the performers, we have to blend in. That means being comfortable in leather.”

“I have some follow-up questions on you being so comfortable in leather, but those will wait for another time.”

“Should we take our shirts off?” Troy asked.

Ilya squeezed the bridge of his nose with a groan. “Leave the shirts on.”

Troy looked affronted. “We could’ve been, like, advertising on The Strip or something.”

“With what signs or flyers? I think we should go with being new guys.” Ilya heard Troy grumble, something about how far a bunny and six-pack abs could go as they followed Ilya around the block to a marked employee entrance. He paused the group and turned to address them. “Listen up. Follow my lead, but we’re either brand new guys or looking for an audition as advertised. We should–”

The employee entrance door suddenly opened and a harried woman leaned out. “There you are! You’re late for rehearsal!” she said with exasperation and a wave. She pulled down the microphone attached to her headset and murmured, “found them. They’ve got Mike too.”

After a momentary pause, Ilya jumped into action to take the lifeline they’d been given. “Come on, we are late.”

They were ushered inside and led to the backstage area crowded with performers looking on at the stage. “Let me have Mike,” the producer said as she scooped the rabbit out of Troy’s arms and gave him a light shove. “You’re on for the Ariana number.”

Troy's panicked gaze met Ilya's as he rode the wave onto the stage with about ten other dancers. He was lined up near the back of the formation as Ariana Grande's "positions" came on over the speakers. A man who exuded the elegance and authority of a director stood in front of the group, clapping and yelling "5, 6, 7, 8!" The group jumped into the dance routine, with Troy looking bewildered and following a beat behind.

Hayden leaned over to Ilya and whispered, "He's not doing half bad." He jumped as Troy and the group slapped their thighs in the midst of a squat. "Geez, that leather sure amplifies the slapping."

"Group B, you're up after this," said the producer to the remaining group.

"Group B?" Ilya murmured to Hayden, looking affronted. "I've never been in a Group B ever, in anything."

He strode over to the producer, hoping to procure some information from her. "Hello there, thanks for saving our asses back there," he flashed his most charming smile. "Why do we need to rehearse this? Did it not go well last night?"

She gave him an annoyed "you know damn well why" look. "Too many of you missed your cues last night. Everyone was too starstruck by Channing Tatum being here and then Shane Hollander and his fiancé showing up."

Well, that was easy enough to get Shane mentioned. But… "his fiancé," seriously?

"Do you remember… were Hollander and," a sigh, "his fiancé here for long?"

She frowned in thought. "Just the standard show time, I don't think I saw him taking pictures afterwards. Maybe some of the group? I'm not sure, once I saw he wasn't with the group I didn't really care anymore."

"Mmmm," Ilya nodded in placating agreement. "He is *very* hot."

"Totally," she replied. "Alright, you and Group B are on now."

Ilya turned and headed onto the stage with Hayden, who looked terrified. "What the fuck, Roz?"

Ilya shrugged. "Just do what Barrett did. It's the same routine, Hayden."

Hayden gave him a mystified look as they lined up. The director's "5, 6, 7, 8!" sounded and the routine started. Ilya kind of got it, but Hayden was a mess. No beat could match up with whatever he was doing. The thigh slap came a solid five seconds after the rest of them. "CUT!" shouted the director. They all stopped and caught their breath as the director conferred with an assistant with emphatic gestures.

"Dude," said the guy that had been dancing to Ilya's left. "Aren't you… Ilya Rozanov? Is this like a behind the scenes skit thing the NHL is filming?"

Ilya smiled and filed that idea away for later. “No, we just snuck in to see if anyone knew where my fiancé was,” he waved his hand around. “Everything else has just kind of happened. Do you know anything, uh…”

“Tyler,” he stuck his hand out and Ilya shook it. “Wait, shit, you can’t find… Shane Hollander? I was pretty close to him from my position on stage. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, other than you guys being super drunk and him being handsy with you.”

Ilya listened intently, hoping for information, but felt a flashing sense of happiness at the image of him and Shane being handsy at a Magic Mike show, of all places. “Anything else you can remember? A mention of another place we were going later or something?”

Tyler thought a little longer as the director and assistant continued their discussion. A mental light bulb came on and Tyler snapped his fingers. “Oh! I think I heard him say something about the Bellagio? And maybe flowers? There’s the conservatory in the Bellagio. Maybe that’s something? Sorry, I can’t remember much else, I’m new and still getting the show figured out.”

Ilya shook his head. “No, Tyler, that is great. More than we had before. We will go there next.”

“Good luck, and uh,” Tyler said as he rubbed the back of his neck. “If you don’t mind, can you tell Luca Haas I said hi? And that I’m a fan?”

Ilya winked. “Tyler from Magic Mike show says hello and he is a big fan. Got it. And thank you.”

Tyler smiled in response just as the director clapped his hands. “Okay! We figured out the issues we think.” Ilya stiffened. They were about to be found out and locked up for trespassing. Or possibly terrible dancing, as he glanced at Hayden. “The choreography. It’s all wrong. We’re starting over.” An audible groan was heard through the group. “Yeah, yeah, I know. Listen, take twenty and meet back here to learn the new choreo. Thank you!” he waved them away and everyone broke focus to head backstage or chat amongst themselves.

Troy walked over to Ilya and Hayden. “New choreo, are you serious? I just got the old routine down,” he crossed his arms.

“Barrett. You are not a Magic Mike performer. Although it is good to have a backup plan in case you do not score goals anymore.”

Troy looked offended. “Hey! I bring more than just goal-scoring to my game, thank you very much.”

“Of course, of course. Listen guys, we need to get out of here. Is that lady still over there? Let’s try the same door we came in.”

Troy looked over towards the door. “Looks like Wendy is gone. Aw man, I didn’t get to tell Mr. Nibbles goodbye. I mean, Mike. What the fuck kind of name is Mike for a rabbit?”

“Mr. Tatum named him himself, dude,” Tyler said, overhearing their conversation. “Don’t let him hear you criticizing the name, he thinks it’s great.” Troy threw his hands up in frustration and Tyler laughed. “I know. Hey, I’ll run interference while you guys head out. Just act natural and no one will notice.”

Ilya reached out and shook Tyler’s hand again. “Thanks, man. We owe you.”

Tyler waved them out as they casually walked to the employee entrance and made their way. When they were finally outside and a good distance away, everyone seemed to breathe a collective sigh of relief.

“Where to next?” Hayden asked. “Did you get anything good from that guy?”

Ilya relayed the information he’d gotten from Tyler to them both as they started walking towards The Strip.

“I’m hungry,” said Hayden. “We haven’t had anything all day.”

“And we just got some cardio in,” Troy added and Hayden nodded in agreement.

“I’m sorry,” said an annoyed Ilya. “My fiancé is literally *missing,* I can’t stop and think about food.”

“Come on,” Hayden said with a hand to Ilya’s shoulder. “It’ll help us stay focused. You won’t be any good at tracking Shane down if your blood sugar is low.”

Ilya sighed and conceded. “Fine. There’s a burrito place, let’s grab and go. After that, we’re going to have a talk about that weird collection of moves you call ‘dancing’ back there.”

Meanwhile…

“Say ‘wedding day’ on three… 1, 2, 3!” David snapped the picture of Shane and Yuna in front of the floral display of two zebras. After a nice lunch at one of the Bellagio restaurants, the trio was visiting the spectacle of the Conservatory and Botanical Garden, where everything was created from flowers. It was a nice moment for Shane to catch his breath and enjoy wandering around with his parents.

“Are you ready?” Yuna asked with a sentimental, knowing smile.

“I am,” Shane replied warmly. “Living together first was a good idea. We just have the strangest– I don’t know– trajectory from the moment we met. After so long being secret and not together, and now being together and out *and* teammates, I’m just glad we took our time now that we finally have it.”

Yuna rubbed his back. “Your dad and I are so proud of you. Both of you. Figuring yourselves out as individuals and then deciding what you wanted as a couple. That’s a hard thing to do, especially in the hockey world. Even if it took a long time, you both made it, together.”

Shane swallowed back the beginnings of tears as he looked around the colorful landscape. “Thanks, mom,” he said as he reached an arm around for a hug.

“Now, what I *can’t* understand is why on earth you don’t have your phone on you for your wedding day!”

Shane blew out a breath. “Ilya was adamant about no contact today. He said it would make it more special when we see each other quote ‘at the altar’,” he said, using air quotes.

“But what about the wedding setup and logistics? Final questions from the planner?” Yuna said as she studied a flamingo.

“We have a super easy all-inclusive package. We made our selections weeks ago, the planner said we just have to show up. They do a zillion of these things, Mom, I’m not worried. I just have my haircut in an hour and then I’ll head back to the hotel to get ready. I’ll check my phone then.”

Yuna threw her hands back. “Alright, alright. I wouldn’t have minded taking a look at the package options, though.”

“I know, I’m sorry. But I already had my hands full talking Ilya out of every extravagant option. In fact, I’m glad he’s not here right now because he would definitely want that lion moved into the venue.” They both laughed at the mental image and some tears finally escaped his eyes. He removed his glasses to wipe them away and was cleaning the lenses with his shirt when he heard footsteps directly behind him.

“Excuse me, Mr. Hollander?” a teenage boy asked with hope brimming in his eyes. “Could I get a picture with you?”

“Hey, yeah sure thing. Nice background here.” He held on to his glasses as he spread his arm on the railing behind the kid, who raised his phone up for the selfie. Shane couldn’t help but smile a bit more than the usual fan photo. It was his wedding day, what the heck.

The smile cracked a bit as he looked out from the selfie to see a swarm of people around him, clamoring for a picture or autograph. The crowd had formed so quickly that someone even bumped into him and he lost his grip on his glasses. He tried to reach for them on the other side of the railing but his mom popped up amidst the throng of people. “Let’s get out of here!” she yelled. He nodded in agreement and they pushed their way through, meeting up with David on the outside of the crowd.

“Everyone okay?” Shane asked as they made their way outside. “Sorry, guess there are still some fans from the All Star Game around.”

His parents nodded as they continued walking in front of the Bellagio fountain. “You okay to go to your haircut on your own while your mom and I do some more touristy stuff?” David

asked.

“Yeah, no problem, Dad. I’ll see you guys later.” They hugged and went their separate ways. It was only later that Shane remembered he had left his glasses lying on the ground back at the Conservatory.

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Ilya, Troy, and Hayden looked in wonder at the amazing floral arrangements. Ilya was immediately drawn to the lion in particular. “This was not listed on our wedding package options, shame.”

“Wish I had my phone,” bemoaned Troy. “Harris would love pictures of this place.”

“You guys walk around and see if you spot anything out of the ordinary. I’ll find someone to talk to.”

They broke apart and Ilya spotted an attendant manning a podium, a young woman who looked like she’d rather be literally anywhere else than at the Conservatory. “Um, excuse me, hello there…” Ilya glanced down at her nametag. “Daisy. Ha. Funny with all the,” he gestured around them but stopped when he realized Daisy was staring at him without any expression of humor or recognition.

“Can I help you, sir.”

Ilya cleared his throat. Tough crowd. “Uh yes actually. I’m having trouble finding my fiancé. His name is Shane Hollander.”

Daisy continued to give him the blank look of someone who saw thousands of people a day, including but not limited to celebrities of all types.

“Here!” Hayden yelled as he inserted not only himself but also the unfolded ESPN The Body magazine cover page in between Daisy and Ilya. Daisy reared back but took the proffered picture.

“Oh yeah, this is the dude that got swarmed earlier. Felt bad for him,” Daisy said.

“Swarmed?? Was he alright? Did he leave on his own?”

“Uh, sorry man, I don’t know,” she paused in thought. “Oh yeah, security picked these up.” She rummaged through a box at the base of her podium, pulled out a pair of glasses, and handed them to Ilya. “Sounds like he dropped these.”

Oh, god. What on earth was going on? Ilya had been approaching this whole day with a small amount of levity, trusting that everything was actually fine and Shane was in the hotel room or with his parents or something. But now, holding Shane’s glasses, the levity was gone.

Shane could be in *actual* danger. He was suddenly desperate to be with Shane. To hold him again. Kiss him. *Marry him.*

Resolved, he looked up at Daisy. “When did this happen?”

She shrugged a shoulder. “An hour and half or so ago. Hey are you gonna take those glasses? You can, I just need to log it.”

“Yes,” Ilya responded, with the same monotone as she supplied. He wasn’t letting this little piece he had of Shane go. “Do you know which way he went when he left?”

“All entries and exits are through these doors here,” she pointed with professional ease in an obviously practiced and oft-recited tone.

Great, so nothing else here. “Thank you for your minimal help, Daisy,” Ilya said as he turned and waved Troy over so they could leave.

“You’re welcome, sir. Have a nice day,” she replied as she was already looking elsewhere.

They started walking and Ilya heard Hayden say, “I’m taking *this* back,” and the cover was snatched from her hand.

Ilya stormed out of the Bellagio, not caring if Troy and Hayden were following closely or not. He was muttering to himself in Russian, repeating all the information they knew about the previous night and present day. They were in front of the fountains when he finally slowed and turned around to face the guys.

“I think we should check back at the hotel, I don’t know where else to go at this point.”

They both looked deflated but resigned to the idea. “Seems like the best option at the moment,” said Troy. He reached out and squeezed Ilya’s bicep. “We’ll find him, don’t worry. And he’s safe I bet. I know it’s scary with the glasses, but it could’ve just been a coincidence.”

Loud music started blaring as the beginning of a fountain show was announced. People started to gather and the guys tried to make their way out. Suddenly, Ilya felt an arm stop him. Troy and Hayden were in front and marched on. Ilya swiveled and was face to face with a rather striking man about his age, maybe younger.

“Mr. Rozanov?” the man asked and Ilya nodded, his words choked in his throat. Who was this man? Did he know about Shane? “Starts in one hour at The Venetian. Find Tommy near the blackjack tables and ask him about the Whiteclaws.”

“What?” Ilya gasped out.

“He’ll take you to the right place,” the man said mysteriously as he held out a card to Ilya. He took the card and read it once, twice, and looked up to find the man had disappeared in the growing crowd watching the fountain show.

Well, their plans had certainly changed.

Invitation card saying "You are invited to join an exclusive, high-stakes game of poker provided by an anonymous host. High buy-in required. Also on the table: information about Shane Hollander"

Chapter End Notes

Huge thanks to Olivia for the wonderful artwork! She created exactly what I was hoping for when I only had a general idea of what I wanted.

Chapter 3: viva las vegas

Chapter Summary

A low whistle came from Hayden. “Wow,” he whispered. “I did *not* see that coming.”

Chapter Notes

Huge thanks again to Olivia for the awesome artwork in Chapter Two!

There's a poker game in this chapter, or at least a semblance of one. Rules of poker are not my forte so proceed accordingly.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I can’t believe this is all they had,” Hayden said with indignation as he adjusted his jacket once again. “I’ve done some ridiculous things and worn some ridiculous things, but never at the same time.”

“First time for everything,” Ilya retorted as they hurried through The Venetian’s main entrance.

They had raced in the direction of the casino, opting to walk the 20 minutes rather than risk the traffic possibilities. In their haste, they had forgotten the detail of their attire. Ilya doubted leather pants would be acceptable at a high buy-in poker game. Night had been falling as they went into the first fancy clothing rental place they could find, which turned out to have extremely slim pickings.

Ilya had snagged the only black tux available, a little dated and didn’t fit quite right, but would do in a pinch. Troy found a gold floral brocade tux that actually looked amazing on him and made his blue eyes pop. Ilya once again cursed their lack of phones and made a mental note to tell Harris about Troy’s new look for future season “Best Dressed” list purposes.

And then, there was Hayden. Poor Hayden.

The last remaining tux or even suit available, according to the woman running the place, was a powder blue concoction. Complete with a voluminous ruffled shirt.

“Someone is going to recognize me in this, mark my words.”

“Another first time, you are on a roll tonight.” Before there was time for Hayden to respond, Ilya led the way through the casino and located the blackjack tables. He looked around subtly for a person possibly named Tommy, probably with a security vibe to him. Such a man came into view and they approached him.

After a brief introduction and a discreet mention of Whiteclaws, to which Tommy seemed annoyed at the topic of the so-called password, they were escorted to the perimeter of the playing area and through a door marked “VIP.”

As they walked, Ilya made an attempt at small talk. “Not a fan of Whiteclaws?”

Tommy scoffed. “More of a Truly fan myself.”

Ilya laughed nervously, tugging on his collar, which seemed entirely too tight now. He had played in some high-stakes poker before… or was it blackjack? Either way, he wasn’t worried. Well, too worried. He reminded himself that most of these types of things were just 75% acting like you knew what you were doing.

They walked through a darkly lit hallway that had many different doors, presumably with other VIP games behind each one. The hallway was borderline creepy, like one of those scary movies Ilya had convinced Shane to watch in the hopes of having Shane cling to him in fright. The plan had backfired though and the opposite had occurred. Finally, Tommy stopped at a door that had a sign “Enter if you dare” on it, Ilya glanced back at Hayden and Troy, whose expressions matched his feeling of growing unease and confusion.

Tommy was entering a passcode of some kind next to the door while shaking his head at the sign. He opened the door into the room and held it open for them. “Welcome, gentlemen. Enjoy.”

They stepped through the threshold into a small, dimly lit room with a half-circle table taking up most of the room. A dealer stood at the flat part of the table, while the curve was occupied by four participants: a literal cowboy, a beautiful woman in a floor-length gown accented with jewels and elegant opera gloves, a man who was actually twisting his mustache, and another man at the far end who was in a tux but the lighting hid his face.

“Mr. Rozanov, welcome. Gentlemen, welcome,” said the shadowed man. A hand gestured for Ilya to take the remaining seat at the table. “Please, join us.” The door closed behind them, too loud amidst the tense atmosphere.

Ilya cleared his throat. “Um, thank you, Mr.?” He needed to know who he was dealing with here.

The man raised his arms in a flourish. “It is I!” The moment built up, nothing happened and Ilya looked to the guys again. Troy shrugged.

The arms came down in frustration. The man loudly whispered, “*Stuart,* the lights! It’s my big reveal!”

“Sorry, sir,” came a response somewhere in the corner of the room.

As if on a dial, the light over the mystery man slowly turned up. Ilya squinted, trying to place the face as quickly as possible. Again, the man's arms rose in a "ta-da" fashion as he repeated "It is I!"

"Channing… Tatum?"

A low whistle came from Hayden. "Wow," he whispered. "I did *not* see that coming."

Channing smiled gleefully. "Yes, yes, quite shocking, I know. I'm dabbling in the information business."

"Information business?" Ilya asked.

Channing's smile remained but it got stiff with annoyance. "Yes, information. Such as information on Shane Hollander. Did you not get my card? Stuart, did he not get my card?"

Ilya narrowed his eyes. "Yes, I received it." He decided to take a chance on the whole "act confident" bit. "I have some feedback on your card."

Channing tilted his head in mock attentiveness. "And?"

Ilya removed it with a flourish and showed it to the table. "Well, if you're going to have this last line to be filled each time teasing your so-called 'information,' it should not be centered. Then you can fill in much more on the same line. Also, if you have a colon like you do, then there's no need for the caret. It's not necessary. It's just sloppy looking."

Channing remained frozen for a moment before throwing his hands up in frustration. "This was my first one, man! It's a new thing!"

Ilya put his hands up in a placating manner. "Hey, I'm just giving you feedback as a recipient of the card."

"I had 500 printed!"

"Well, that's on you. Did you get any suggestions beforehand?"

Channing crossed his arms with a petulant expression. "No. Stuart tried but I didn't listen."

"I guess that is a lesson for next time, then. Sounds like Stuart is more than capable. Second pair of eyes can be very helpful."

"Yeah. Sorry, Stuart."

"Shall we begin?" Ilya asked.

Channing sighed. "Yeah, might as well."

Ilya took his seat while Hayden and Troy stood behind him. He bought in with the dealer using the cash he'd withdrawn. Ilya studied his chips, shiny with the visage of prestige. He

was once again taken aback at the day and the predicament he'd found himself in. He took a breath and thought of Shane.

As the game began, it became clear that the other players were just props against Ilya's legitimate reasons for participating. Ilya wondered if their staggered exits were planned in advance or if they were just poorly advised to use their smaller buy-ins on bad hands. Ilya did okay by his own estimation, losing some hands but winning others on bluffs or otherwise. Channing was decent, but frankly speaking, he shouldn't be building an information-sharing empire on his poker skills.

After an hour or so of play, the cowboy was knocked out and just Channing and Ilya remained.

"And then there were two," Channing said in a mocking tone.

Ilya gave a small smile in return. "I am anxious to hear this information you have."

"Have you been looking for him all day? I heard you three crashed the Magic Mike rehearsal."

Ilya made a quiet sound of agreement.

"I think," Channing held his finger up, "we should increase the pot just a bit. Stuart?"

Stuart approached with a bag and gave it to Channing. He reached in and pulled out a familiar phone and set it on the table. He did it twice more, and their three phones stared back at them. Channing dramatically slid them into the already sizeable pot.

"Apparently, there was a lot of talk last night about no phones on the wedding day from you, Ilya," said Channing. "I thought I'd help make your point. Also, you left them."

"How do you know what we were talking about?"

"I have eyes and ears all throughout the Magic Mike theater, Ilya. The phones are just an addition to the information I have."

"Let's get this over with, then."

The same hand still going, Ilya liked what he had, but did not show it just yet. He pushed all of his chips forward as they both went all-in. The dealer dealt the river, and then it was time to reveal each other's hands.

Channing went first. "I don't think you're getting your information today, Rozanov." He laid down his hand, a straight in diamonds.

"Wow," said Ilya. "Quite the villainous hand there."

Channing laughed. "I know, right?"

"It's too bad," Ilya said with mock sadness.

Channing's smile disappeared as quickly as it had come. "What?"

Ilya put down his cards, revealing a royal flush. "I will take my information and our phones now, thank you." Hayden and Troy gasped and low-whistled in shock.

Channing's face quickly turned into a pout. "I can't believe this. I did everything right!"

"Luck of the draw, my friend," Ilya replied as he stood up and reached across to pull the pot towards him. Hayden and Troy eagerly leaned over to help gather the winnings and their respective phones. The phone batteries were dead, of course, but they each cradled them like lost treasure.

Ilya continued to neatly stack the chips. "Now," he began. "Tell me this information."

Channing huffed and sunk back in his chair in defeat. "You insisted to Shane Hollander that you not talk or see each other today until the wedding ceremony. He reluctantly agreed, but told you his schedule, and then probably left his phone in his room for the day. He was working out, meeting his parents for lunch and a tour of the conservatory at The Bellagio, then getting a haircut. Then he was–"

"Hold on," Ilya raised a hand. "He was going to get a haircut?!"

"Yes," Channing sighed. "Apparently you disagreed about the haircut then as well." He glanced at his watch. "It's probably over at this point. Shane was going back to the hotel to get ready for the wedding. Which starts in about, oh, thirty minutes," his gleeful smile returned at that realization.

Panic rose in Ilya. He quickly shoved the chips into a bag given to him by the dealer. "Well, in that case, I have a wedding to get to, Mr. Tatum. Thank you for this rather unimpressive meeting. Good luck with your information empire. It can only go up from here."

"Hey!" Channing yelled in indignation, standing up. "That's not very nice."

Ilya shrugged. "Feedback is feedback. Troy, anything you want to add?"

Troy looked shocked at the introduction. "Um, oh yeah," he cleared his throat. "Mike is not a good name for a rabbit."

Channing gasped and spluttered as they made their way out.

"That was awesome," Troy said.

"We have to hurry," said Ilya as they made their way back to the regular playing area. "I need to cash this out. You guys find that vending machine with the phone chargers and call a car. We have to get back to the hotel."

"You got it," said Hayden.

"At least we've got our wedding outfits on!" exclaimed Troy as they trotted away, Hayden's complaining voice fading along with them.

Ilya cashed out quickly, making a pretty penny on the game, and met back up with the guys at the front entrance.

“Three minutes,” Hayden said, handing Ilya a charger. They were in the car by the time his phone showed any signs of life. Eternity seemed to pass as the phone turned on and found a signal to fetch messages and calls.

There were a slew of notifications waiting for him, but the only ones that mattered were the two messages from Shane.

Shane (10:07 AM): Ilya, Today is our wedding day. I thought about writing a card or something, but I kind of like the idea of a text. Our early days of texting were mostly just hotel room numbers, you know? Anyways… I’m just… really excited for today. To become your husband. This has been an incredible year being with you in ways I only dreamed about for so long. And no, not just THOSE kind of ways, I can see you smirking as you read this even as I write it. For such a long time, I never thought this day would come. Not for me, and certainly not for us. But we’re here. You make me smile every day, Ilya. You make my days brighter and I’m so happy. A whole new chapter awaits us and I can’t wait to get started. All my love, Shane.

Shane (5:51 PM): hey babe, I just wanted to check in with you. I kinda expected to see you when I got back from my haircut. Just let me know, please. Love you

Ilya tried to call Shane, but he didn’t pick up. He then quickly typed out a response that he was on the way and would see Shane soon. The stress of the day slowly retreated and was replaced with excitement and a touch of nerves. He was getting married in a matter of minutes to the love of his life!

The car was silent as the guys all caught up on their phones. Ilya cleared his throat to get their attention. “I wanted to thank you both for your help today. I couldn’t have done this without you. I think, deep down, I always knew Shane was safe. But it was touch and go there for a bit.”

They laughed in agreement. “Glad we helped,” said Hayden. “We’ll always be there for you two. Well, I assume we will. Kinda speaking for us both here.”

“Yeah,” agreed Troy. “Always. I know you’d be there for me if I couldn’t find Harris.”

“Pretty sure if Harris was kidnapped, he could talk his way out of it,” Ilya joked.

Troy smiled. “He’d make friends with them and then his laugh would give away his location for sure.”

“Were you able to get in touch with him?”

“Yeah, he was close to freaking out, but he knew things would be hectic on wedding day. I’ll wait to tell him what *kind* of hectic it was.”

“That is a good plan. Hayden? All good with Jackie and the kids?”

Hayden nodded. “Yeah, all good. Apparently Chompy is missing again, probably in my suitcase. Don’t tell Arthur, but there’s a backup Chompy being used until I get back.”

“Good to have a backup Chompy,” Ilya replied with a laugh. He closed his eyes and leaned back against the headrest, relishing the brief opportunity to savor the moment with his friends while on the way to his wedding.

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The car finally dropped them off at the hotel and they ran inside and towards the ceremony site near the back of the building. He finally spotted Yuna in a floor-length gown looking worried with her phone to her ear. He waved and shouted, “Yuna!”

She looked up and looked a small percentage relieved, but the stress didn’t completely leave her face. “Oh Ilya, there you all are, we’ve been looking all over for you!”

They embraced and Ilya kissed her on the cheek. “Have you seen Shane? Please tell me you’ve seen Shane.”

She gave him a slightly suspicious look and replied, “Not for about thirty minutes or so. He was ready and waiting in the lobby and then said he needed a minute. Haven’t seen him since. I’m getting worried and his phone is just going to voicemail.”

Alarm raced through him. “You said he needed a minute? Was he nervous?”

“Of course, it’s nerve-wracking, your wedding day,” Yuna replied. “He was nervous all day. But incredibly excited. You know how he is about marrying you.”

Ilya smiled softly and squeezed her hand. “Yes, I know. I feel it too.”

He thought about where Shane would go in the minutes before getting married. How he would be feeling the finality of a certain chapter of his life ending, but a new one beginning. So many new beginnings after so many years of hiding. And they were here, in Vegas, which had been the setting of multiple momentous occasions for them.

And suddenly, he knew. Of course. His sweet Shane.

“I know where he is,” he said to Yuna. “We will be back.”

“We’ll stay here,” Troy announced.

“Yes,” said Yuna with a skeptical look aimed at Troy & Hayden. “I have some questions about these outfits.”

Ilya turned and walked towards the elevators. Pressing the button, he was elated that one was immediately available. He stepped in and hit the top floor button. He was adjusting his tux jacket as the doors were closing when they suddenly stopped and opened again. He sighed and backed up as a trio of loud, drunk girls entered the elevator. They giggled as they pressed the button Ilya had already selected and it seemed to take too long for the doors to finally close.

“Oh my god! Is it your wedding day?” one of the girls asked him.

“What?”

“The tuxedo,” she said. “Did you get married today?”

He looked down at his tux and smiled. “Not yet. Today is my wedding day though.” The girls squealed and Ilya winced.

“Are you getting married at the Strat-o-sphere?,” another of the girls asked.

“No,” Ilya said with a chuckle. “I’m finding my groom up here then we are getting married downstairs.”

They awww’ed in unison and the first girl said, “If you want to grab a pre-wedding drink with us, that’s where we’ll be.”

“Thank you, ladies,” Ilya said with a wink as the elevator dinged its arrival. He let the girls out, who went to the right towards the bar while he went left.

There, in a quiet dark corner, stood Shane looking over the city. His silhouette glowed with the glittering city below. Ilya approached slowly, his heart aching and overflowing with love and joy. He was reminded of another time, in Tampa, when he had approached Shane on a dark beach, moonlight outlining his figure. How times had changed.

“Found you,” Ilya said.

Shane jumped a bit and turned around. “Ilya!” He took a few long steps towards Ilya and launched himself into Ilya’s arms. They hugged for a long moment, faces pressed into each other’s necks and breathing each other in.

“Missed you.”

Shane leaned back to hold Ilya’s face. “I missed you, too. So much.” They kissed briefly and Shane leaned back again to take a look at Ilya. “Wait, this isn’t your tux.”

“It’s a long story,” Ilya replied.

Shane laughed and shook his head. “I’m sure it is. I’m glad you’re here to tell it, but maybe later. We don’t want to be late to our own wedding.”

Ilya held Shane's shoulders and looked him over. "You look amazing. I was worried about the haircut, I like it long. But the trim looks good. Did you know that I love those glasses?"

Shane smiled. "I've heard that once or twice, I think."

"Can't wait to see you in just them later," Ilya winked.

Shane blushed and straightened his jacket sleeves in an effort to think about anything else. He then took Ilya's hand and guided him to the railing where Shane had been standing earlier. "Just for a sec," he murmured. He reached the railing and Ilya stood directly behind, flush with Shane's back. Ilya's hands reached out around Shane's waist and they just… stood there, enjoying the view and relative quiet. "You know," Shane said. "The last time we were here —"

"Was very different between us," Ilya said as he leaned forward and rested his head on Shane's shoulder.

"Well, yeah. I was going to say though that the last time we were up here, when I found you at this spot, I thought this area was used for weddings. And I was right. It was an option in our package."

"You didn't tell me that. You didn't want to get married here?"

Shane shrugged. "I figured it wasn't a particularly good memory for you."

"I seem to recall a particularly good kiss."

Shane softly laughed. "It was, but I pushed you away. I'm sorry about that."

Ilya rubbed Shane's waist. "All is forgiven, moy lyubimyy. I was a dick that night too. I'm sorry as well."

"It's okay. I get it now. Hindsight and all." Shane leaned back and rested his head on Ilya's shoulder. "I like the idea of getting married here at this hotel, but reclaiming another spot as ours. A fresh one with only happy memories attached to it. I just wanted to come here and… I don't know, say goodbye to this part of our lives."

"I know what you mean. That's what I figured you were doing when your mom said you needed a minute." Shane turned around and wrapped his arms around Ilya's neck. He leaned in and kissed Ilya with so much affection, Ilya felt his eyes water. He pulled back and said, "I can't cry before the ceremony!"

Shane sniffed and smiled. "You're right, same here. Are you ready?"

"More than."

Hand in hand, they waved at the three girls who squealed their congratulations until Shane and Ilya could no longer hear them as they rode the elevator down to the lobby. Ilya kissed Shane's temple and laughed.

“What?” Shane asked.

“Just wait until you see Hayden.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading my first multi-chapter fic!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!