

To Anchor Himself and Just... Stay

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/57826912>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Alternate Ending , Smut , Fluff and Smut , Hurt/Comfort , With extra comfort , Light Angst , Idiots in Love , Mutual Pining , Dumb Hockey Boys , Injury Recovery , If you dont move in with your crush and live with him for like a month straight is it even a crush?
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2024-08-01 Completed: 2024-10-06 Words: 25,455 Chapters: 8/8

To Anchor Himself and Just... Stay

by [calistoga](#)

Summary

“When will we get a chance again?” Shane asked.

And, so help him, in that moment Ilya wanted to tell him he would stay with him. That he would move into his apartment and help him with his recovery and make him sandwiches and watch the playoffs with him and read him his boring hockey book.” Heated Rivalry, Chapter 21

What if Ilya had stayed? What if he'd gone to Montreal to be with Shane while he recovered from his concussion and fractured collar bone?

A "hurt/comfort" alternate ending of Heated Rivalry.

Notes

There are sections of italicized text taken directly from Heated Rivalry as a way to provide a “starting point” to this alternate ending, and in other situations where the original felt appropriate, or should be maintained for the sake of plot/character/relationship development and I felt should more or less stay true to the book. In addition, there are other random lines here and there borrowed from the book, so if it sounds like it's from HR, it probably is. Most are deliberate references, especially dialogue.

The primary canon divergence here is that to make this ending work, Boston did not make the playoffs in 2017 (sorry, boys).

Huge thank you to radlerz in the discord for editing! And to the discord and [@peacelillies](#) for brainstorming and chatting and helping me get this thing out of my head! 🥰💕

Chapter 1

Chapter Theme Song: "Origami" by Saint Motel

Mid-April 2017

The image of Shane's motionless body on the ice had burned itself into Ilya's brain. Every time he closed his eyes, that was what he saw. In every silent moment, the sound of Shane's body crashing into the boards then onto the ground replayed again and again.

Ilya loved Cliff like a little brother, total idiot that he was, but for the last few hours Ilya had wanted to fucking kill him. It was unreasonable, but the fury Ilya felt had few other outlets. He knew Cliff felt bad, he knew it hadn't been intentional, but Ilya had still glared at him while he sat in the penalty box. In the locker room, Ilya had put on his best captain's face and spoken calmly to his teammates and the media. It was always horrific to see someone completely knocked out cold, regardless of team or personal connection. At least that could explain most of Ilya's reactions.

Management hadn't heard any updates about Shane, so the media certainly didn't know anything either. That didn't stop Ilya from refreshing every sports news website and Twitter feed he could find. He definitely wasn't going to watch any replays of the hit, even if it meant there might be video of Shane with the paramedics, anything that might give some sign of Shane's condition. Some movement of his legs to show he wasn't paralyzed, at least. The scene was already too painfully vivid in Ilya's mind; seeing it again would only make him sick.

Shane's injury had thrown a wrench into Ilya's plan, awful as it was. All Ilya had wanted was one more evening with him. Their memorable Skype call when Ilya was in Moscow had made it all too clear that this had gone too far. His desire for Shane had become unbearable. The worry he felt in his chest was terrifying. He shouldn't be this worried about Shane because it could only mean something so much worse. Every feeling that coursed through him was a painful reminder of how hard he'd fallen for Shane.

Maybe the Skype call had been a mistake. Maybe his short-lived feelings of happiness during the call had been a big fucking mistake too. Maybe he should delete those photos from Vegas he still had on his phone. Forcefully cut out and kill these weird sentimental feelings he'd been harboring towards Shane... Hollander. Towards Hollander. He'd known all along that getting mixed up with Hollander would only cause pain in the end, no matter what the end was: his career snuffed out with shame and embarrassment, or his heart crushed beyond repair

The Team's flight out of Montreal was at eleven. Surely management could find something out about Hollander by then. Ilya would visit him at the hospital in the morning, perform his duties as Captain, and be done.

By 3 AM, Ilya still hadn't slept. At this point, he wasn't sure if he even wanted to sleep. He'd already had enough nightmares about lifeless bodies to last him a lifetime.

He refreshed the news page on his phone one more time.

Ilya couldn't remember falling asleep, but he woke up to the sound of his phone buzzing at around 7 AM.

“Hollander is at Montreal General Hospital. Voyageur management says he's awake, condition is stable. You can visit but be back by 10,” the text message from the Bears’ travel manager read.

Thank fucking Christ.

Ilya called a taxi immediately and practically ran downstairs to the hotel lobby.

In the cab, Ilya's thoughts raced. Hollander was stable, but that didn't mean he was okay. A hundred different combinations of horrific injuries flashed through his mind. It was a useless, anxious thought process. He'd find out Hollander's condition soon enough.

He entered the hospital and got Hollander's room number from an overly helpful woman at the front desk, who seemed to think Ilya's sportsmanship was rather impressive.

The door to Hollander's room was slightly ajar, so Ilya knocked softly before nudging it open.

And there Hollander was, propped up in a hospital bed, arm in a sling, hooked up to countless beeping and buzzing machines. He looked so *fragile*.

“Ilya!” he exclaimed joyfully, beaming brightly, his smile so wide it crinkled his eyes.

Oh god, Shane.

Ilya went to Shane's bedside, beyond relieved that Shane was okay. A concussion and a fractured collar bone were rather manageable compared to other sports injuries. He gently caressed Shane’s face as they both admitted how much they had wanted to see each other the night before, lamenting the lost time.

“When will we get a chance again?” Shane asked.

And, so help him, in that moment Ilya wanted to tell him he would stay with him. That he would move into his apartment and help him with his recovery and make him sandwiches and watch the playoffs with him and read him his boring hockey book.

And god, did he want that. So much, it was frightening.

“I... I don't know. I need to be in Boston, finish the season.”

“Then after that? Are you going back home to Moscow?”

“No, definitely not.” Boston wasn't making the playoffs that year, but it wasn't the shame or disappointment of the failed season that bothered Ilya the most; it was the fact that Ilya had no idea what to do with himself during all the newfound free time he had since he wasn't traveling to Moscow. He worried that his mind would run away from him, spiraling with thoughts about...

“Shane,” he sighed.

Shane reached his hand up and took Ilya's, tangling their fingers together and holding tight. “Will you come to the cottage?”

“I—I don't know.” No. No, there was no way Ilya could do that. He couldn't possibly spend that much time alone with Shane. Not if he ever wanted to be free of this.

“We can have a week or two, Ilya,” Shane said. “Haven't you ever wanted more time?”

Ilya's stomach clenched. He should just say no. Let Shane believe that he didn't want any more from him than the hour or two they stole a few times each season.

But instead he brushed his thumb over the back of Shane's hand and said, “Of course.”

“Then come to the cottage. Please. It will just be the two of us, completely alone for as long as you want to stay.”

And, god, that sounded so perfect. And Shane was looking at him like his heart would shatter if Ilya said no.

So Ilya took the coward's way out.

“Maybe.”

Shane beamed at him like he wasn't a man who was in a hospital bed with serious injuries.

Ilya's heart shuddered at how badly Shane wanted this. How could Ilya possibly walk away? Especially when he felt the same? Ilya wasn't sure he could survive the guilt of causing such immense heartache for both of them. How could he live with himself knowing he had hurt Shane so deeply?

“Ilya. Could you get something for me?” Shane suddenly looked more serious.

“Sure. Anything.”

“In that duffle bag, the side pocket. Can you get my keys?” He pointed over to a Voyageurs branded bag on a chair. His parents must have brought it for him last night. Ilya also noted that Shane's heart monitor began to quietly beep at a slightly faster pace.

Ilya retrieved a large set of keys with various color-coded rings on a carabiner. Shane lifted a set of four keys attached to a gold ring and asked Ilya to remove them. Once they were free of the rest, Shane moved the keys to Ilya's palm, then placed his own hand over top, holding the set in between.

“Ilya,” Shane whispered. A blush spread across his cheeks as he explained. “These... these are for the investment building, here in Montreal. I want you to take them. All of the apartments there are still empty, it's totally private. And you can come visit anytime. Open invitation.”

Ilya felt winded, like he had just been punched in the chest. “Shane, I...” He didn't know what to say.

“Just take them. I have extra copies at home. You don't need to make a decision today. Just... Think about it.”

Ilya paused. “Okay. I will,” he said quietly.

Shane looked so pleased to hear that, Ilya was overwhelmed. He lifted their joined hands and kissed the back of Shane's. He couldn't stop himself.

The door handle turned and Shane quickly released his hand. Ilya jumped back and turned to face the nurse who entered the room.

“Uh-oh,” she said with a smile. “You’re not trying to smother him with a pillow, are you, Mr. Rozanov?”

“No,” Ilya said, giving her a shaky smile in return. “I was just...leaving, actually.”

“Thank you for coming,” Shane said, all business. “I appreciate it.”

Ilya nodded. “Get well soon, Hollander.”

He quickly left the hospital room of the man he loved.

Ilya couldn't breathe. He couldn't think. He could only shove his hands in his jacket pockets, holding the keyring in a vise grip, while his heart floated inside his chest.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Ilya and Shane long for each other while they're apart, and Ilya makes a snap decision.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Chapter Theme Song - “Needing/Getting” by OK Go

Early May

Shane spent the first week of recovery with his parents in Ottawa. He was still moving slowly, extremely limited in what he could do by both of his injuries, so he was beyond grateful to have his parents with him. He couldn't imagine trying to get through this all alone.

That didn't stop him from getting antsy, though.

Shane was always someone who enjoyed his independence. He enjoyed his own routines, making his own decisions, and taking care of himself. Now he felt trapped. He couldn't help but feel restless.

He tried audio books, listening to documentaries, and radio broadcasts of the remaining Voyageur regular season games. He tried walking when his headaches weren't too bad, only to find that sunlight made things worse.

He couldn't drive. He couldn't exercise. He couldn't go out. Hell, he could barely move without getting exhausted. His team was playing without him and getting ready for the playoffs, taking Shane's social circle away too. If it weren't for the jigsaw puzzles with his dad, he'd have gone stir crazy after just a few days.

He was horribly bored.

He'd be back in Montreal next week for some follow-up appointments, and he'd at least be able to meet with the team before they hit the road for Games 1 and 2 of the first round. It was good to have something to look forward to. Something more realistic than getting a surprise visitor from Boston, anyway.

He was trying not to get his hopes up about Ilya, but the boredom meant his mind wandered and daydreamed about him more often than he cared to admit. Shane could barely remember Ilya's visit to the hospital, but the missing keys reminded him of his offer. Even the gold

keyring itself was a reminder of Ilya, which Shane was embarrassed to admit was an intentional choice; the Bears wore gold jerseys at their away games.

He remembered holding Ilya's hand with the keys between their palms. He replayed Ilya's soft touches to his hair and face. Shane tried and failed to stop himself from imagining Ilya appearing at the building. He knew it was a risk. He knew it would be taking things too far. He knew Ilya might have second thoughts, that he might want to end everything instead. And wouldn't that just be the world's saddest joke?

He turned on ESPN, sat at the dining room table, and focused his attention on the search for sky blue puzzle pieces. Spiraling thoughts about impossible things weren't going to help anyone.

Ilya lit a cigarette and savored the smoke hitting his lungs and the familiar comfort of nicotine. He looked out at the waters of Boston Harbor from a park bench and sighed.

He had spent the last disappointing week of the regular season in Boston, and had been holed up in his penthouse since locker cleanout. He couldn't bear to see anyone right now and only wanted to be alone.

The sting of the failed season put Ilya in an awful mood. In a weird way, it felt like the perfect time to cut things off with Shane. He was already hurting, so why not? The pain of ending things couldn't make it that much worse.

Ilya had come to this bench with a plan in mind. He was going to write one last text to Shane and tell him that they should stop seeing each other. He was going to delete the photos from Vegas. He was going to throw Shane's keys into the fucking harbor. He was going to fucking move on from Shane and finally free himself from this constant struggle with his own feelings. He was going to stop torturing himself once and for all.

On the flight back from Montreal, he'd kept the keyring looped around his finger the entire time, rubbing his fingertips across the bumps and ridges of each key. For some reason, the gold ring had somehow comforted him. It had been a reminder of how much Shane wanted to see him again, a reminder of Shane's bright, joyful expression when he had seen Ilya at the hospital.

Holding them now, the keys felt like they weighed a thousand pounds. Like a lead vest, holding him down and suffocating him. Shane's joyful face haunted him instead, reminding him of the impossible.

First, he decided to deal with the photos. He unlocked his phone and went into the gallery. The "Boring" folder was at the very bottom of the list, hidden away and rarely opened.

He looked at the photos for the first time in over a year. And goddamn it, Shane's annoyed, scrunched up, freckled face *changed* something in him.

The memories of how fucking *happy* he felt with this guy. How smitten Ilya was, how he couldn't get enough of Shane's shy smiles and his soft hair and those stupid adorable freckles. How much he looked forward to every single moment with him. The overwhelming feelings that had spilled out of him in his bedroom months ago, making him call Shane "*sweetheart*", a pet name he'd never said aloud before in his life. How increasingly happy and stable and comforted he felt with Shane, year after year, hookup after hookup.

It would be stupid to pursue anything with Shane. But it would probably be *really* fucking stupid to throw it all away.

Fuck.

Before he could think too much about how bad of an idea it was, he made a snap decision. He was going to Montreal. Tonight.

Ilya's Audi hummed around him as he headed north on the interstate. Music played softly over the radio, but he paid no attention to it on the five-hour drive. He had Shane's keyring looped on his finger yet again, thumbing over the ridges of the keys for the thousandth time since he'd received them two weeks ago. His only thoughts were of what potentially lay ahead of him, his stomach in knots.

This was so stupid. What if Shane had changed his mind? What if he'd only given Ilya the keys because he was on incredible painkillers in the hospital? What if Shane had realized what a bad fucking idea this was, how huge of a risk it was for both of them? Ilya wasn't just driving to Canada; he was leaping over the edge of a cliff and there was no going back. With every mile Ilya put behind him, he was that much closer to a chance at real happiness, something he'd never thought he'd have, but also the chance of gut-wrenching heartbreak. He kept his foot on the gas and powered forward, despite how fucking terrifying it was to do so.

Ilya arrived in Montreal just after ten. The sun had set, but the lights of the city shone around him. His GPS guided him to Shane's "investment building", the same address Shane had sent him to years ago, though this was the first time he'd ever driven himself there rather than take a taxi.

Behind the three-story building was a small parking lot, fortunately quiet, dark, and deserted. Ilya parked the black coupe, the most discreet of his car collection. He steeled himself, hid his curly hair under a ball cap, and threw his jacket hood over it before stepping out. Every window in the building was dark, every floor above the commercial space still unused just as Shane had promised. He grabbed his duffel bag of hastily-packed clothes and toiletries and headed toward the door, unlocked it, and slipped inside, quickly locking it behind him.

Ilya froze in the familiar stairwell, in the silence and stillness. It seemed like every breath echoed around him, as if even his heart was audible. He ascended the stairs with oddly cautious footsteps and entered the apartment.

It was almost spooky, seeing the place so empty and lifeless, when he'd usually be pressing Shane to a wall by now. He dropped his bag to the floor, but didn't turn the lights on. Ilya felt

like he was intruding. As if he shouldn't be here, not alone, anyway, and he needed to keep his presence a secret. The dark apartment was faintly illuminated by the lamp posts and business signs on the street below.

With each step inside, a flash of memory appeared. Ilya grazed his fingertips along the wall as he walked further in, remembering moments when Shane crashed his body against Ilya's in the same places. He passed the furnished living room where Shane had once been "rewarded" for a Montreal win by getting to christen the new couch with Ilya. The bedroom looked exactly the same as it did before and after their encounters: as if it were perfectly new and untouched. Only they knew of the hot, stolen hours of release and sweat and intimacy that were shared there.

He collapsed in the center of the bed, flat on his back with his arms splayed out. Again, he debated even telling Shane that he'd arrived. He could just leave the keys in the mailbox, go back home to Boston, and save himself the pain and embarrassment. Or... He could finally get the uninterrupted time with Shane he'd wanted for longer than he cared to admit.

He imagined Shane's beaming face when he saw Ilya at the hospital, so unashamedly joyful; he imagined the same face greeting Ilya at the door to this very apartment. Ilya's heart clenched.

At twelve-thirty in the morning, he sent Shane a message that simply said, "**I'm here. At the building,**" then laid on top of the comforter, and unsuccessfully tried to sleep.

The next morning

Shane woke up early on the same mountain of pillows he'd been nesting in for over a week. Before moving, he checked in with himself. His head felt okay. His arm fortunately hadn't moved during the night and was still propped up just as he'd left it.

He stretched his fingers, wrist, and elbow, keeping the joints active before confining the limb to his sling all day. He carefully sat up, put the sling on, and went to grab an ice pack for the pain and swelling that still remained. He brushed his teeth, grabbed some blueberries from the fridge and ate them as he paced through his apartment. The blender was too loud for him to be able to make his usual smoothies, so he resorted to simply eating the fruit whole throughout the day. At least that gave him something to do.

As he walked, he considered what to do with himself for the day. The concussion limited his choices of activity so much it was difficult not to get bored. He might do leg stretches and listen to news about the playoffs, or maybe find another audiobook. Montreal would be playing tonight on the road; maybe he should call Hayden to see how he was feeling.

Shane took one more lap around his apartment, finished his handful of fruit, and retrieved his phone from the nightstand. As soon as he unlocked it, he froze. His heart practically stopped as he read the message he'd received in the middle of the night:

Lily: **I'm here. At the building.**

Holy shit.

Holy fucking shit. Ilya was *here* .

He ordered a taxi and took a shower as fast as he could without hurting himself. He grabbed the small “go bag” of clothes and supplies that had been sitting in his closet for a week, and threw his medications into it just in case.

In the elevator, he sent one text back: **I'll be there in 20 minutes.**

Chapter End Notes

More chapters coming soon as I work through editing them!

Any comments or feedback are welcome! :D I'd love to hear any impressions so far while I iron out the rest. 💕

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Reunited at last. 😊

Chapter Notes

Chapter Theme Song - “I’m So In Love With You” by Jill Andrews (feat. Seth Avett)

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

Oh god. Shane was on the way. He was actually on his fucking way over. To see Ilya.

Ilya had barely slept all night. He had been sick with worry over his own stupid text message. Now he felt something else entirely. Like he was hungry? But also like he might vomit? He replied with a quick, “Ok”, since he couldn't figure out anything else to say. His brain was fried.

He changed into clean clothes and freshened up a bit, then flew down the stairwell to check for Shane.

He paced back and forth, chewing on his thumbnail. He swapped between anxiously looking out into the small parking lot and staring at Shane's text message, acutely aware of every single minute that passed.

A black SUV pulled up and Ilya's heart began to race. He unlocked the door to the stairwell and stepped back, keeping out of view. Ilya suddenly realized just how rarely they met in the daytime.

The driver walked around to open the back car door and Shane Hollander stepped out. His left arm was cradled in a sling, and he was wearing dark, stylish sunglasses. Ilya could see he was insisting to the driver that he could manage the small duffel bag he'd brought with him. Shane smiled and thanked him. As the car left, he approached the building, and Ilya. Ilya's heart thumped so loudly in his chest, he swore he could hear it echo off the walls.

Ilya pushed the door open a few helpful inches and Shane slid inside. Ilya locked the door behind him and shoved the gold keyring into his pocket.

Shane dropped his bag to the floor, moved his sunglasses to the collar of his t-shirt, and turned to face Ilya. They looked at each other, and a beautiful smile broke out across Shane's

face. Ilya smiled back at him, happiness overwhelming whatever nervousness still remained, and suddenly he could no longer remember why he'd felt like he should leave.

“Hi,” Shane said.

“Hi.” Ilya stepped closer to him, but he wasn't sure how to touch him. Ilya only knew he wanted to be as careful as possible. His eyes scanned over Shane's whole body, as if checking for other injuries. “Are you...okay?”

“Yeah. Not bad. Not great, but fine.”

“Good,” Ilya said. He raised a tentative hand to Shane's face. He brushed the backs of his fingers up Shane's jaw, then softly held his cheek. Shane closed his eyes and sighed, tilting his head into Ilya's palm. Shane's free hand gently landed on Ilya's waist and squeezed reassuringly.

Shane was so sweet, and beautiful, and *here*, his broken body be damned. Ilya stepped closer, his chest nearly touching Shane's arm in the sling. He pushed the soft strands of Shane's hair away from his face then held the back of his head. Shane's dark eyes looked hopeful, pleading even. Ilya wanted to kiss him so badly, but...

“Can I... Is it okay?” Ilya asked quietly. His thumb traced across the freckles on Shane's cheek.

“Yes,” Shane whispered back. He stepped closer and touched Ilya's chest with the hand held by the sling, rubbing the backs of his knuckles against Ilya's body and sending a pleasant tingling sensation through him.

Ilya lowered his head and gently pressed his lips to Shane's. It was maybe the softest kiss they had ever shared. There was no heat, no urgency, none of the frantic energy that they'd usually kissed with. But the moment their lips touched, *everything made sense. All of Ilya's nerves left him.*

Ilya's mouth met Shane's with the tenderness he had wanted to show him for months. Ilya enjoyed the newness of this kind of kissing, the new sensations of warmth that filled his chest. He couldn't believe that just last night, he was stupidly ready to let this go.

Shane gripped Ilya's waist and inhaled deeply, pushing slightly harder against him. Ilya deepened the kiss, opening his mouth and pushing back, their tongues gently sliding together. They both clearly wanted to escalate things, but were understandably hesitant.

Shane's hand slid up Ilya's chest and onto his chin, spacing their faces apart. He looked up at Ilya with such happiness, it was honestly hard to tell he was still recovering from significant injuries.

“Let's go?” Shane asked.

“Yes.” Ilya kissed his cheek once more before he bent down to grab Shane's duffle bag, then offered Shane his hand. Shane took it immediately, laced their fingers together, and

squeezed.

And for the first time, they were holding hands. Walking up a private, nondescript stairwell, yes, but holding hands.

Once inside the apartment, Shane started to reach his good arm around Ilya's back, then pulled away, squeezing his eyes shut, wincing, and breathing through his nose through some kind of pain. "Sorry, I have to sit down, actually. That was a lot of stairs."

"Is okay. Is it your head?"

"Yeah, it'll be fine though, once I'm sitting," Shane said, pushing his thumb into his temple. "Just, too much at once. We should close the curtains too, it's kinda bright here."

"Sure." Ilya walked around the apartment and blocked as much sunlight as he could, dimming the living room and the kitchen that joined it. "Do you need something? Water? Honestly, I don't know what you have to do for a concussion."

"Mostly I need to stop moving right now. Water would be great, though," Shane replied thankfully. He gingerly sank down onto the couch. Ilya brought a glass of cold water and Shane looked at him as if he'd brought the moon out of the sky. Shane took a long sip and tipped his head back against the couch, eyes closed and breath steady. "Thank you," he whispered with a small smile.

Ilya's chest clenched, and his heart along with it. He hated seeing Shane like this. It was hard to see someone so determined, so athletic, so powerful and capable, winded by a few flights of stairs.

"I'm really glad you're here," Shane said. "It's something I've been looking forward to."

Ilya smirked to hide the warmth that spread through him. Maybe it wasn't just the drugs Shane had at the hospital that had made him so sweetly honest. He sat on the coffee table in front of Shane and leaned forward with his elbows on his knees. "You have?"

"Yeah," he said and smiled shyly. "I don't remember much from when you visited the hospital, honestly. But I remember you, I remember inviting you here, and thinking about it felt... nice." He looked at his glass of water and traced his thumb over the rim. He placed the glass on the table, took one of Ilya's hands in his own, and passed over Ilya's knuckles with his thumb.

"Thank you. For being here," Shane continued. "I know there's not much I can do right now. Especially not...physically." A light blush bloomed across Shane's face and he looked down.

"I don't mind it. That's, um..." God. What could Ilya say that wouldn't give it all away?

"That's not why I came. I guess." He squeezed Shane's hand, then huffed a small laugh.

"Well. Not only that."

The follow-up question "*why else, then ?*" went unasked, but it hung in the air and practically answered itself. And Shane just looked at him, his little smile telling Ilya that he understood

what went unsaid.

Shane pulled on Ilya's hand, and Ilya went to him and sat next to Shane on the couch, angling towards him. Ilya cupped the sides of Shane's face with both hands and kissed him again.

This time their kissing was needy, full of desire. Their faces pressed close as their tongues messily slipped against each other, their breaths hot and intense. Shane's good arm wrapped around Ilya's shoulders and pulled him closer. Ilya leaned over him, putting a hand on his thigh as Shane slid his hand down Ilya's back. Shane sighed into his mouth and dipped his fingertips into the waistband of Ilya's jeans.

Ilya kissed up Shane's face, from his chin to the hinge of his jaw, then pulled back and looked at him. "What, um. What can we do? I don't want to hurt you."

Shane smiled, almost embarrassed. "I'm not sure of the best way to do this. I can't lay down, and I can't move much because of my head."

Ilya laughed. "But sex is still okay, yes? If you sit still?"

"Yeah, I can do that at least."

"I think we can make it work." Ilya kissed Shane again as he shifted and knelt in between Shane's legs. He slowly stroked his hands up each of Shane's thighs, then began unbuttoning Shane's shirt, starting at the bottom and working up. Ilya leaned in and kissed each new section of exposed skin, across Shane's abs, his belly button, enjoying the soft twitches of his stomach. Shane sighed and dug his fingers into Ilya's curls.

Ilya gripped Shane's waist with both hands and held him tightly as he continued kissing Shane's stomach. He wouldn't be able to get the shirt all the way off with the sling in the way, but enough of Shane's chest was exposed to please Ilya for now. He kissed the back of Shane's hand in the sling, then lightly brushed his lips across Shane's knuckles.

Shane leaned forward and pulled Ilya's chin up, then kissed him hungrily. His fingertips dug into Ilya's stubble, hand gripping his jaw. His tongue darted and slid against Ilya's, as if trying to get closer than was physically possible.

"I'm so glad you're here," Shane repeated, whispering into Ilya's mouth. Ilya's stomach flipped at the admission and he kissed Shane deeply again.

"Me too," Ilya replied. Ilya had missed this. He'd missed Shane's body, feeling his firm muscles and smooth skin under his hands. He'd missed the little sounds he could draw out of Shane's mouth. He pressed his hand to Shane's cock, already sporting an impressive erection and lightly stroked over his shorts. He'd missed this too, how fucking eager and ready Shane always was for him.

"Is this okay?" Ilya asked, pulling away and letting Shane rest back against the couch.

"More than okay. Fuck," Shane panted out.

“Good.” Ilya unbuttoned Shane's fly then hooked his fingers into the waistband of his underwear. Shane lifted his hips and Ilya stripped the underwear and shorts off in one smooth motion, pooling them at Shane's feet and finally revealing Shane's glistening cock.

“Take this off. Wanna see you,” Shane said, gripping the sleeve of Ilya's t-shirt.

“Bossy,” Ilya said with a smile, then obeyed, tossing the shirt away over his shoulder. “There. Happy?”

Shane beamed back at him then scanned Ilya's bare chest appraisingly, enjoying the view. “Fuck yes.”

The simple words sent a wave of arousal through Ilya, just knowing how much Shane liked Ilya's body. Ilya never pretended to be unaware of how attractive he was, but catching Shane's attention in particular did something to him.

He bent down and kissed a slow trail up one of Shane's thighs, matching his pace with his hand on the other leg. Shane gripped Ilya's shoulder and his breathing quickened.

Once Ilya reached Shane's cock, he couldn't drag out the teasing any longer. As much as he wanted to take his time with Shane's body, he couldn't wait. It had been over two months since they'd actually had sex together, and Ilya's desire had only grown in that time apart, despite his attempts to suffocate it.

Ilya held onto Shane's thighs and wrapped his lips around the head of his cock, working his tongue around it. Shane moaned in a way that Ilya couldn't interpret, so he pulled back and looked up at him. “Good? No pain?”

Shane's head was still collapsed back against the couch, his eyes closed and jaw slack. “Yeah. Really good. No pain now, but if something hurts, I'll tell you.”

“Okay,” Ilya said, then returned to what he was doing. He took Shane in deep and set a gentle pace, loving the whimpers and hisses Shane made. One of Ilya's hands slid up Shane's stomach, his fingertips reaching Shane's hand that was confined to his chest. Shane locked their fingers together and held on tightly, while his right hand massaged Ilya's neck and back.

After a few blissful minutes, Shane must have been close to coming, so he pushed on Ilya's shoulder and said, “Wait a second.” Ilya pulled off immediately. Shane was breathing hard, his fingers tangled into Ilya's curls. Ilya sat back on his heels and planted a small kiss on Shane's knee.

Shane patted his thigh invitingly. “Come here.”

And Ilya went. He stood and stripped off the rest of his clothes, his own untouched cock now desperate for contact. He placed a knee on the couch next to Shane's right leg. “Are you... Are you sure? It will be okay?”

“Yeah. It's my shoulder that's fucked, not my legs. Come here,” he said again, grinning. He definitely wasn't being subtle about enjoying Ilya's dick so close to his face either. He slid his

hand up Ilya's thigh, and Ilya huffed at the contact, Shane's touch sending jolts of pleasure through him.

Ilya sank down and straddled Shane, settling comfortably on his thighs. He held the back of Shane's head and kissed him messily as their cocks slid together between them, making them both groan and sigh.

"Fuck, Shane. Yes," Ilya breathed out as he ground against Shane's hips. Shane slid his hand down to Ilya's ass, kneading and squeezing.

Ilya wrapped his hand around both their cocks together, using Shane's wetness to slide his thumb over the heads. Ilya shuddered and gasped and took Shane's mouth, pressing him back into the sofa.

Ilya set a pace that quickly reduced them both to moaning, quivering messes. One hand stroked them both faster while Ilya held Shane's face with the other. Shane warned him that he was about to come. They looked each other in the eyes as they both tumbled over the edge within seconds of each other, covering Ilya's fist and chest with their release. Ilya crashed his mouth onto Shane's as he came back down to earth, gradually slowing to a soft, almost romantic kiss.

Ilya nuzzled into the space under Shane's ear, kissing his jaw and his neck before planting his forehead on Shane's good shoulder while they each caught their breath.

"Fuck," Ilya said simply, making Shane laugh.

"Yeah," Shane agreed, whatever the sentiment was. He lightly kissed Ilya's collarbone.

Ilya suddenly became aware of how strangely unworried he felt. There was still a part of him that wondered how Shane felt about *them* and about how their encounters had shifted to something *more*, but the little kiss seemed to communicate something.

"I think it's time for a shower," Shane said, which was definitely not what Ilya thought the kiss meant. But Ilya smiled all the same; it was such a *Hollander* thing to say.

"Probably," Ilya replied, and stood up. He reached out a hand to help Shane stand up. He debated whether to tell Shane that he needed a shower for more than one reason, since seeing Shane's message that morning made him sprint down three flights of stairs and stand around in the stairwell for fifteen minutes instead of taking one earlier.

As they walked together into the familiar bathroom, Ilya told him to wait a moment. He turned on the bedroom lights and let them softly illuminate the bathroom, rather than switching on the bright lights overhead. "Less bright is better, yes?" he asked as he came back.

"Yeah," Shane said, smiling sweetly. "It's a lot better. Thank you."

Ilya switched on the hot water, then touched the strap on Shane's sling and asked, "So what are the rules with this thing? Are you allowed to take it off sometimes? Or you're stuck in it

forever?”

“I can take it off to shower, and I occasionally sleep without it, and that's about it for now. Just trying to keep my arm from moving as much as possible for a few weeks.” Shane started to move the strap when Ilya intercepted his hand.

“Can I? Will it be easier?”

Shane looked relieved. “Sure.”

Ilya moved as gently as he could. He undid the shoulder strap, then held Shane's hand as he removed the padded section that cradled his arm. He slowly lowered Shane's hand to his side, all while periodically checking Shane's face for any signs of discomfort. The fondness Ilya saw instead nearly undid him.

“Okay?” he asked.

“Yes. More than okay.” They both stepped into the hot water, letting the gentle rainfall wash over them. Shane leaned into Ilya's chest, putting his forehead on Ilya's shoulder and running the fingertips of his good hand through Ilya's chest hair. “I'll definitely need a nap after this though.”

Ilya hummed and brushed his fingers up Shane's spine. “Do you get tired a lot?”

“Yeah. I sleep through most of the day now, as much as I hate it.”

“You don't relax enough,” Ilya said as he reached for the bottle of body wash. He poured some into his hands then spread it across Shane's back, gently massaging into his skin. He smoothed his hands up and down his spine, bringing a soft hum out of Shane.

Once they'd cleaned up, it seemed like Shane was truly in danger of falling asleep on his feet. After stepping out of the shower, Ilya helped Shane dry off, making sure to carefully avoid his injury. As he patted the towel around Shane's legs, Shane placed his hand on Ilya's shoulder. The small touch felt so dangerously, wonderfully intimate.

Ilya turned the bedroom lights off, leaving only a dim glow of sunlight around the curtains. He retrieved Shane's glass of water, along with the duffle bag and extra pillows from the couch at Shane's request. Shane arranged everything in a particular way on the bed while Ilya got dressed. Shane slipped into sweatpants and a large t-shirt with one-handed motions that seemed awkward, but practiced; he must have done this dozens of times by now. It was sad to see just how much of Shane's life had been upended by these injuries. Shane didn't ask for help though, so Ilya stood back and let him work.

Shane sat down and slowly laid back onto the stack of pillows, keeping his torso inclined. He placed his left arm onto a second stack next to him. He took a long drink of water, then closed his eyes and breathed hard through his nose.

As he set the glass on the nightstand, Shane reached out and took Ilya's hand. “Will you stay?” Shane asked sleepily. “For a little while?”

I could never leave you alone like this was Ilya's first thought, and it crashed into him like a fucking truck. Ilya offered a small smile to try and hide how overwhelming his desire was to stay. "Not like I can go somewhere in Montreal. Not without your crazy fans attacking me."

"I meant. You're not going back to Boston right now, are you?"

"No," he answered solemnly, then sat next to Shane on the bed and kissed the back of his hand. "I will stay." Shane looked relieved, then pulled Ilya's hand to his lips to return the kiss.

"Thank you, Ilya," Shane said quietly. "Thank you for being here."

Ilya brushed his fingertips across Shane's cheek, then pushed aside a few damp strands of hair that had fallen onto his forehead. Shane's eyes fluttered closed. Ilya leaned in and pressed one more kiss just above Shane's brow, let it linger for a moment, then stood up.

"Sleep well," he whispered, then left the room and softly closed the door.

Ilya paced around the apartment, making a loop between the living room and kitchen, occasionally raking a hand through his hair. There was really no going back from this. Ilya's heart felt too big in his chest because despite the pain Shane was in, *he looked so happy. Somehow Ilya made him happy. Ilya always wanted to make him happy.*

He noticed Shane had forgotten his phone on the couch. After a few seconds' debate, he decided to take it to him. Maybe he'd need it when he woke up. Ilya also couldn't deny how curious he was to see...

Ilya gently opened the bedroom door, careful to stay completely silent. Ilya had never seen him asleep before. Shane lay there peacefully and he just looked so... *Beautiful*. Heart-stoppingly beautiful. Ilya spent too many selfish seconds staring at him, memorizing every tiny detail.

Of course he wouldn't leave. He couldn't possibly leave Shane like this. He suddenly realized he couldn't imagine leaving a healthy Shane either. Unless Shane outright told him to go, he'd do what he could to stay as long as possible.

In the hospital, Shane had asked him, "*Haven't you ever wanted more time?*" and the question rang in his ears now, repeating itself again and again in Shane's voice. Ilya's answer was *yes*. His heart had known the answer was *yes* for a long time, far longer than his brain had.

After setting the phone on the nightstand, Ilya slipped out of the room and collapsed onto the couch.

Ilya couldn't believe what he had been reduced to. He was... infatuated. It was disgusting.



Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Shane and Ilya spend more time with each other than ever before.

Chapter Notes

Chapter theme song: “Kiss Goodnight” by IDK How But They Found Me (seriously it’s like this song was custom written for this chapter)

Shane woke up in a familiar position, but in an unusual place. He was propped up with his arm cradled on some throw pillows, as expected, but the bedroom he was in was not his own. It was an extremely familiar room, but not one he'd ever slept in.

The hookup building. Ilya!

Oh shit. Holy fucking shit, Ilya was here. Or at least, he *had been* here. There was a part of Shane that thought maybe Ilya had fled back to Boston by now.

He looked around the dark bedroom, dimmed by curtains thankfully blocking the sunlight. He found his phone on the nightstand and checked the time. It was just after 12 PM. There weren't any messages other than Ilya's “Ok” from that morning.

Shane sat up and listened, trying to ignore the headache that stabbed into each of his thoughts. There wasn't any sound coming from the rest of the apartment. *Oh god, what if Ilya really had left?* What if that was all he'd wanted? Just some quick release to kick off the summer? What if Ilya had done the smart thing and left this encounter as just a hookup like all the others, and nothing more? Shane certainly wouldn't blame him.

No. There was no way that was the case. If Ilya had just wanted sex, he probably wouldn't have driven 300 miles and crossed an international border for it. But as Shane tied his sling on and arranged his left arm inside, his mind was racing with possibilities. Maybe the man he loved was on the other side of that bedroom door. Maybe that man had slipped away and was driving back to Boston right now.

Shane took a painkiller and gulped down the glass of water that was on the nightstand. He sat and breathed for a few more quiet moments.

Still no sound came from the living room. He stepped to the door and slowly opened it, fully expecting to see that he was completely alone in the barren apartment.

Instead, what he saw was something beautiful.

Ilya was asleep on the couch, lying on his side. Shane had never seen Ilya sleeping before. He'd never seen his face so relaxed, neutral, and peaceful, with his curls gently falling in different directions. He'd never seen Ilya's arms curled up in front of his chest protectively like this, the back of one hand under his cheek. He'd never paid attention to how adorable his feet looked in socks.

Oh *god*. Shane was so fucking in love with him, he almost couldn't stand it. This gorgeous man who had driven hundreds of miles into another country just to see him. Who'd been so cautious and caring and *tender* towards Shane's injured, broken body. And not only that, Ilya had *stayed*.

Shane sat on a barstool in the kitchen and just kept looking at Ilya. It might have been weird, but he wasn't sure when he'd get another chance. There was something special about seeing someone so lively and animated be so completely at peace.

With a bit of guilt, Shane also realized that he'd asked for all the pillows from the sofa earlier, which left Ilya with none. The curled up hand under Ilya's face was not only adorable, but also functional, apparently.

Shane wasn't sure how long he could or should keep this up. It might have been *wrong* to keep staring at Ilya, but it wasn't like he was planning to wake him up. Ilya probably needed the sleep as much as Shane had.

Luckily, his dilemma soon solved itself as Ilya began to stir. Shane heard him grunt softly, then Ilya rolled to his back and scrubbed a hand over his face and through his hair. He rubbed his eyes and looked at the ceiling as he blinked awake, figuring out where he was. Shane just watched with fascination, appreciating being able to observe these tiny, intimate details of him.

Shane stood and walked towards him, making his footsteps obvious to avoid startling him. Ilya looked at him and smiled softly.

Ilya sat up, one side of his hair endearingly flatter than the other. Shane sat on the couch next to him, placing his hand on Ilya's knee.

"Hi," Shane said.

"Hi. Are you okay?" Ilya's expression looked so *soft*.

"Yeah. Fine. Same as usual. How are you?"

"Okay too," Ilya tilted his head from side to side, stretching. "Except my neck maybe. Some asshole took all the pillows from here."

Shane laughed. “Well... Sorry.” He took Ilya’s hand and Ilya laced their fingers together. Shane enjoyed a brief fantasy of Ilya sleeping next to him instead, then waking up to have Ilya be the first person he sees.

A slight pang hit his stomach, which was a welcome distraction from whatever his imagination was about to run wild with. “Are you hungry? Holy shit, I just realized you probably haven’t eaten at all. There’s literally no food in this place.”

“I threw a box of protein bars in my bag for the drive. But yes, I’m starving.”

“I still can’t believe you drove all the way here from Boston.”

Ilya paused, then rubbed his thumb across Shane’s knuckles. “I can’t either.”

“What made you decide to do it? Don’t get me wrong, I’m really happy you did. But I didn’t really expect...”

Ilya gently took Shane’s face in his hands, then gave him a soft kiss on the corner of his mouth. “Let’s find food first.” He pulled back and smirked like he was keeping a secret. Not much point trying to press the issue now.

“Sure. There’s a lot of great places nearby that deliver.” Shane went to a drawer in the kitchen and pulled out a few takeout menus. They sat together at the kitchen island to pore over them. “There’s a really nice Asian fusion restaurant a few blocks away, a burger place, a deli across the street. Or anything else, if you want.” He suddenly felt slightly nervous. It really felt like Ilya was his guest and he wanted to be hospitable.

“Asian fusion sounds good. But you will need to pay. I only have like ten Canadian dollars.”

Shane dismissed him with a wave of his hand. With the obscene amount of money they made, he wasn’t about to worry about splitting costs. Regardless, he felt like treating Ilya, especially since he’d made the drive. They made their selections, and Shane called to place their order. Ilya traced a fingertip up and down Shane’s arm while he spoke on the phone, causing goosebumps. It was so pleasant, and *so fucking distracting*.

“How will we pick it up though?” Ilya asked once Shane had hung up. “Probably no one should see me in Montreal and you shouldn’t go down the stairs again.”

“Right. Hm... I guess we could... No. I got it. You go unlock the door to the stairwell, then I’ll ask the courier to come up here and I’ll open the door.”

“Smart.”

Shane turned to look at him and suddenly felt *something* wash over him. Shane thought for a moment how oddly new this was for them. He’d underestimated how much he would love something as... *domestic* as just ordering food and spending time together. He’d been close to that conclusion back in November when Ilya had cooked for them at his penthouse, but Shane had been too terrified and confused by his feelings then, despite how much he actually enjoyed everything they did that evening.

Now, all he really wanted was for his collarbone to heal as quickly as possible, if only so he could properly hug Ilya tight to his chest. He'd *missed* Ilya. He decided to do the next best thing.

He stood, pushed on one of Ilya's shoulders to turn him on the barstool, and stepped between Ilya's legs. He held the side of Ilya's neck and brushed his thumb through the stubble on his cheek, then lightly touched over his bottom lip. Ilya tilted his face into Shane's palm and closed his eyes.

Shane slid his hand to the back of Ilya's head, then pulled their faces together. They kissed softly at first, but soon enough Shane was wantonly panting against Ilya's mouth, rolling his hips against Ilya. "The food will be here in an hour," Shane said against Ilya's cheek.

"Mm."

"Do you think that's enough time?" he asked suggestively.

"Not for everything I want to do to you, but I think we can figure something out."

Heat flooded Shane's body and he kissed Ilya passionately, as if kissing him quenched a powerful thirst, and Ilya responded in kind. Ilya grunted softly and wrapped one hand around Shane's good shoulder, gripping him tightly and pulling him closer, while the other slid under Shane's t-shirt and snaked around his waist. Their kisses quickly became messier, more intense, as Shane opened his mouth, welcoming the familiar slide of Ilya's tongue.

Ilya wrapped one leg around Shane's thigh just below his hip, pulling him tighter into the space between his legs. Ilya's erection was noticeable against Shane's stomach through their clothes. "God, Ilya. *Yes*," was all Shane could manage to say before they hungrily kissed again.

Shane really wasn't sure how well his body could handle movement, but he needed to taste Ilya, concussion be damned. He sank to his knees and Ilya stood, looming over him and running his fingers through Shane's hair. Shane reached up to glide his palm across Ilya's abs as he kissed whatever skin he could reach.

"Fuck, Shane. You look so good like this. Beautiful."

Ilya undid his fly and slid his jeans down, leaving only the thin material of his underwear to poorly conceal his erection. Shane pressed his face against him and gently mouthed at his cock, something he'd daydreamed about doing far too many times in the last few weeks.

He hauled Ilya's underwear down with one ungraceful hand and wasted no time taking Ilya deep into his mouth. Shane savored the taste of him and enjoyed the soft brushes of Ilya's fingertips on his scalp, across his cheeks, and on his neck, while Ilya quietly moaned above him.

Shane held onto Ilya as he worked him, then swallowed around him as Ilya came, babbling a string of English curses and something else in Russian. Ilya breathed hard while his fingers were still tangled in Shane's hair. He offered Shane a hand and helped him stand up.

When Ilya returned the favor, Shane didn't last long at all. He leaned against the kitchen island for support while Ilya skillfully got him off. A harsh cry escaped from Shane's lips as he came, and he realized that a few other words were dangerously close to escaping him too.

Ilya kissed across Shane's hips, then gently tucked Shane back into his underwear and sweats. He stood up and carefully wrapped his arms around him. "How's your head? Good?" he asked into Shane's hair.

Shane leaned into Ilya's shoulder. There was a slight pain at the back of his head, but nothing unusual. "Fine. I took meds earlier, so that's definitely helping."

Ilya slowly rubbed his palms across Shane's back in random patterns, making Shane inordinately relaxed. These gentle touches were still so new, compared to their years of frantic, aggressive hookups. The small gestures of affection were enough to knock Shane off his feet.

Shane exhaled a small laugh. "Fuck, I'd really love to do more than that with you. I hate these stupid injuries."

"Is okay. I would like more too, but it's okay. Here. Sit," Ilya whispered. He pulled at Shane's hips to move him away from the counter and back onto a barstool. Ilya continued his light touches, running his hands over his body, wherever he could reach. He occasionally pressed light kisses to Shane's cheeks and forehead. Shane's entire body felt like it was about to melt into a puddle.

"The truth is," Ilya said quietly and deliberately, like he'd carefully planned this response. "To answer your question before... I just wanted to see you."

Shane's heart felt like it was about to burst out of his chest. He was so in love with Ilya, and he was getting pretty fucking close to sure that Ilya felt the same. Ilya drove all the way here. He stayed. He was so gentle and careful with Shane's broken body. And all because he just wanted to *see him*.

"I wanted to see you too," Shane said, which felt like a greater confession than it actually was. He gripped Ilya's bicep and looked him in the eyes. "I have an idea."

"What?"

"While you're here, what if... we're just honest with each other. Let's just say what we're actually thinking. Maybe... Say how we really feel."

For a split second, something unusual flashed in Ilya's eyes. Something unsure, or pained. "I will try," he said.

"Will you?" Shane narrowed his eyes at him.

"Yes! Fine. I will try your honesty game."

"Okay." Shane couldn't stop a hopeful grin from spreading across his face.

A short time later, Shane's phone pinged, informing them that the courier was on the way. Ilya completed his phase of their plan by unlocking the stairwell door, then hid in the bedroom while Shane collected the order.

Ilya overheard Shane chatting with the courier in French. It was interesting to hear how Shane's voice changed between languages, how his tone and tenor altered. Ilya felt like he was discovering a whole new side of Shane. Ilya caught a few words, mainly names of hockey teams and players, some words that were similar enough in English or Russian.

Once he heard the front door close, Ilya emerged from the bedroom and saw Shane had already started unpacking the food at the small dining table. Ilya came up from behind and joined him, stroking one hand up Shane's spine.

"Big fan of yours?" he asked.

"Fan of Montreal, yeah. He wanted to ask how things were going without me."

"And are they surviving without you? Or falling to pieces?"

"They're fine. Coach replaced me with Wesley, and Hayden says they're doing okay together, clicking well enough. It's good they had some regular season games left to really figure out how to work together without playoffs pressure," Shane replied as they sat at the table and set things out.

They'd each gotten noodle dishes, something Thai inspired, Ilya supposed. He hadn't really paid attention to the menu, had been too distracted delightedly watching how obviously nervous Shane was while trying to be hospitable.

"Good for them."

"Yeah," Shane said, then paused a moment between bites. "You know. I'm sorry about how things ended up for Boston. You guys deserved a lot better."

"Yes, well. Shit happens when idiots get injured and take themselves out. Nothing I could do with the shithheads they gave me."

"Still. It really sucks that that happened. That's frustrating," Shane said. He really did sound genuine, as much as Ilya wanted to make a joke about him not actually being sorry.

Ilya didn't feel like dwelling on his team anymore. As they ate, Ilya took note of how expertly Shane used his chopsticks. It made sense with Shane's family background, but that wasn't something he had ever considered much. Shane made it look effortless and elegant, while for Ilya it was something he'd never quite mastered. He found he rather enjoyed watching Shane use them so deftly. He liked the way his fingers looked, moving the implements with skill and precision.

Ilya pointed his fork at Shane's hand. "You learn that from your mom? How to use those? All I know is that she's Japanese or something."

“Chopsticks? Yeah. Mom taught me when I was little for the times she makes Japanese food. She didn't force me to learn, thankfully, but you can tell it makes her really happy to see the effort.”

“When I drove here, I worried a bit that you might be in Ottawa maybe. With your parents.”

“I was at first. Spent the first week or so with them. And it was good. It was great to have the help and just have people to talk to, especially since I can barely do *anything*. But I, uh. Quickly realized how much I'd rather be on my own.”

“But you still cannot do much, yes? And that is okay for you?”

“It's... manageable. Boring sometimes, definitely.” He looked down at the table with a little smile as his ears turned slightly pink. Ilya had a fleeting impulse to bite them. “But um. If I'm being honest, I wanted to be back in Montreal. Just in case some guy decided to show up and return my keys, y'know?”

Ilya looked down as he felt an odd warmth across his face. He rarely blushed, but there was something built into Shane's words that made them seem like a confession rather than a simple statement. Shane had been *hoping* for this. He'd left the support of his loving parents just on the *hope* that he'd see Ilya.

“What did your parents think? About you coming back to be alone?”

“Nervous at first. Concerned. But I told them I wanted to be here so I could stay close to the team and the doctors and all. They seemed okay with that lie.”

“Sneaky. Have you ever lied to your parents before?”

“Probably. I mean... I must have. But not often, no.”

How adorable. So fucking innocent and *pure*.

“You are a good son.”

“I try to be. My parents are awesome. They're seriously the best.”

“Sounds like it,” Ilya replied. Shane nodded and looked at him with sympathy. Nothing needed to be said about how Ilya's own parents vastly differed from Shane's.

Later, as they cleaned up, it hit Ilya how *nice* this had been. Just sharing a meal with Shane and talking. It was practically uncharted territory, but still comforting somehow. He felt like he could let his guard down and actually be himself. He found it wasn't actually difficult to keep up with Shane's honesty game, either. Sharing more of himself wasn't as scary as it had been in the past.

What was weird, however, was just how much he *did* want to share with Shane. He wanted to let Shane into every facet of himself, and it was surprising just how *unscary* that was. It was exciting, actually.

The afternoon hours passed in a blur. After lunch, they simply talked, and, for lack of a better word, *cuddled*. While on the couch, Shane laid back on Ilya's chest and Ilya played with his hair until they both fell asleep for another hour. They held hands, exchanged gentle caresses, and softly kissed each other while they talked and shared more than they had before in all their years combined. Ilya couldn't believe how much he wanted this and how easy it was to lose hours and hours just spending time with Shane.

After the sun set, Shane took Ilya's hand and looked down as he squeezed the knuckles on each of Ilya's fingers. He looked nervous. "So, um. I have to tell you. I'll need to go home tonight. I have a doctor coming to check on me super early in the morning."

Ilya felt a slight jab in his chest. Of course Shane would ask him to leave. The day together had been amazing, but it couldn't last, right?

"And I wanted to ask," Shane continued quietly, "if you would come home with me."

Holy shit. Ilya's breath caught in his throat. "Really?" he whispered. He couldn't quite hide his disbelief, but he tried to control the surprise that must have crossed his face.

"Yeah. If you want. Unless you were planning to go back home?"

"No. No plans."

"Oh," Shane said happily. "Because yeah, if you're not leaving, you don't have to stay here in this empty building. There's actually food at my place, for one thing." A little smile stretched across his face.

"That does sound like a plus."

"So you'll do it? You'll come with me?"

Ilya paused and looked down at their hands. He'd promised to be honest, right? "Yes. I would like that a lot, actually."

Shane was absolutely *beaming*. He threw his arm around Ilya's shoulders and hugged him as best he could. Ilya would do practically anything to keep seeing Shane's bright, joyful face.

"Do we have everything?" Ilya asked, their two duffle bags slung over his shoulders. He'd stuffed his curly hair back under his hat and hood, returning to incognito mode.

"Yep. All clear," Shane answered as he grabbed the small trash bag from their lunch and turned off the last lights. With all the laundry done and everything tidied, the apartment had been returned to its nearly untouched state.

They locked up and slowly made their way down the stairs, hand in hand. When they reached the exit, Ilya watched Shane take a big breath and slowly let it out. He squeezed Shane's hand

reassuringly. “Ready?”

Shane nodded, then scanned the parking lot through the window. It was late, approaching midnight, and the lot was dark and empty aside from a handful of cars, including Ilya’s. Ilya locked up behind them and they quietly crossed the parking lot, Shane’s head on a nervous swivel.

This was a new level to their sneaking around, a stark departure from their usual creeping up hotel stairwells and slipping in and out of rooms. They’d never been anywhere *outside* together before. In a way it was exciting, but Ilya knew Shane’s mind must be racing with all the possibilities of this risk. If a fan saw them and recognized them, there really wasn’t a good way to explain why Ilya was in Montreal with Shane. Not at all.

As Ilya drove, Shane gave directions to his Westmount home, their hands intertwined on Shane’s lap. There was a significant part of Ilya that worried about what this meant for them, while another part worried about potentially getting caught. Nevertheless, the gentle touch of Shane’s fingers across his knuckles quieted Ilya’s frantic thoughts. It grounded him, reminding him of all the goodness and warmth and happiness that also potentially lay ahead.

Ilya parked in one of Shane’s reserved spots in the garage at his apartment building. They had discussed a way to sneak Ilya into the building without being noticed. The strategy involved a rarely used stairwell and lots of Shane checking if the coast was clear before getting on the elevator on the second floor rather than in the lobby. Convoluting, but Ilya supposed it made sense.

He helped Shane out of the car, grabbed their bags, and tried to calm his racing heart as he embarked on the most high-stress stealth mission of his life. He now fully understood why Shane was apprehensive about coming to his penthouse in Boston.

The late hour worked in their favor and they made it to Shane’s door with no issues. And there it was. The place that Ilya had been dreaming about and trying to imagine for years, secretly dying to see.

Shane opened the door and switched on dim, soft lighting to reveal... Well. A perfectly normal, albeit expensive, apartment. It looked like it was straight out of a catalog of boring apartment designs.

Ilya took off his shoes, dropped the bags, and walked into the wide living room towards floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Montreal skyline. The living room joined a small dining area next to a semi-enclosed kitchen on one side. Everything was so normal and uninteresting and so perfectly *Shane* that Ilya could only smile at himself.

“Was this what you’ve been imagining?” Shane asked with some humor in his voice.

Ilya turned and smirked at him. “I forgot I told you that.” He traced a finger along the edge of the entertainment center as he walked back to Shane from the windows. “It’s very nice.”

“Thanks. Yeah, it’s nothing crazy, but it’s a good place. So, make yourself at home, really,” Shane said, already sounding so obviously nervous. Ilya stepped into his space and their chests lightly grazed against each other. He dragged his fingers up Shane’s arms as he began to ramble. “You’re welcome to use whatever you like. Take whatever you want to eat or drink. And if you want something else, the grocery store nearby can deliver, or-”

Ilya cut Shane off with a kiss, holding Shane’s jaw with one strong hand while the other pressed against the base of his spine, pulling their bodies together. Ilya kissed him softly and gently as relief washed over him, the overwhelming pleasure of simply seeing Shane’s home at last. He kissed Shane with gratitude, in a way.

“I want to sleep in your bed, Shane Hollander,” Ilya murmured against Shane’s cheek.

“I want to do lots of things in my bed.”

“Show me. Take me to bed.”

Shane led him down a short hallway to the room that Ilya had briefly seen during their Skype call.

“This is your room,” Ilya whispered, mostly to himself, still amazed that he was here.

There was the king sized bed with the boring blue comforter, this time with huge piles of pillows to support Shane while he slept. There were big windows, a set of shelves, and a door to the closet that probably contained all of Shane’s lame sweaters and polo shirts.

“This is your parents,” Ilya said, pointing at the framed photo on the wide dresser opposite the bed.

“Yep.”

Ilya shot him a playful look before flipping the frame facedown. “Do not want to shock them.” Shane laughed and sat on the end of the bed, then Ilya joined him, sitting close enough that their hips touched.

“It’s kind of surreal. Having you here,” Shane said.

“Yes. Bad or good?”

“Good,” Shane answered quickly. “Really fucking good.” He grabbed Ilya’s hand and held it tightly.

“Good,” Ilya replied. He’d only been inside this apartment for about ten minutes total, but somehow he already knew this was where he wanted to be. He wanted to stay here, with Shane, and that was it. He didn’t have a single idea about anything else.

Ilya brought Shane’s hand to his lips and gently kissed across his knuckles. He wanted to get Shane into bed as soon as he could, and not even for sex reasons, as unusual as that might have been. “Let’s go to bed? Is late, you must be tired.”

“Yeah. A bit.”

They got ready for bed in Shane’s en suite bathroom and Shane gave Ilya a *Visit Ottawa* coffee mug to hold his toothbrush. Then they both went to change into something to sleep in.

Ilya dug around in his duffle bag for about two seconds before he realized his poor planning was now catching up to him. “This is going to sound weird but, can I borrow some shorts or something? I just have jeans, I think.”

Shane grinned at him. “Did you not plan that far ahead for your impulse trip to Montreal?”

“Well. No. Not really.”

“I’ve definitely got some sweats or basketball shorts you can take.” He opened a drawer and started digging around. “These could work... no, you’re a lot taller than me. These are probably a good size, maybe. A million Montreal logos, probably not...”

“Do you ever relax?”

Shane paused and huffed. “You cannot seriously be making fun of me right now. While you’re a guest in my house? In my bedroom?”

“No,” Ilya said. He mussed Shane’s hair and kissed the top of his head. “I like you, Shane.”

“I like you too, Ilya,” Shane replied, then smirked and shoved the loose sweatpants covered in Montreal logos into Ilya’s chest.

The simple statement made Ilya’s heart flutter.

Shane got himself arranged on his pillows as he did before and carefully positioned his left arm. He left more space on his good side, then patted the comforter for Ilya to join him. Ilya tucked himself into Shane, their bodies flush together and legs tangled under the blanket, and rested his hand on Shane’s chest. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, so unbelievably happy and calm.

Shane’s question flew through his mind again - *haven’t you ever wanted more time?* Ilya’s answer was *yes*, one thousand percent, if only to finally share moments like these with Shane. Ilya wanted to go to sleep next to him, to wake up with him, to stay in this bed forever with him if he could.

He slid up Shane’s body to kiss him slowly and sweetly. “Goodnight, Shane,” Ilya whispered against his lips.

Shane kissed him back as he inhaled deeply, like he was savoring something. He gripped Ilya’s shoulder, pulling him tighter against himself. “Goodnight, Ilya,” he breathed in reply.

After one more slow, thorough kiss, Ilya kissed his cheek lightly. He laid his head down on Shane’s chest, where the rhythm of Shane’s heartbeat quickly lulled him into one of the best nights of sleep of his life.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Waking up together 😊

Chapter Notes

Chapter Theme Song - “Collar Full” by Panic! At The Disco

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

The first thing Shane noticed as he woke up was that he was surrounded by pure *heat*. The second thing was the tremendous weight on his torso, hips and legs. He briefly wondered if he'd bought a weighted blanket and forgotten about it.

The weight shifted slightly, and Shane heard a deep inhale and a soft sigh. He opened his eyes to see a mop of beautiful, golden brown curls resting on his chest.

Ilya Rozanov was cuddled tight against Shane's body. In Shane's bed, in his home. After the countless daydreams he'd had about this exact thing, it all seemed too good to be true. He'd wanted this for so long, to wake up with Ilya, to hold him close and just breathe together. The swell of emotion made his heart feel full, pressing out against his ribcage with full force.

With a feather-light touch, Shane grazed his fingertips up Ilya's spine, tracing the bumps and grooves. He gently dipped his fingers into Ilya's soft hair and played with it, looping the curls around his knuckles, pulling them taught and letting them go, watching them instantly spring back up. Shane delighted in how intimate it felt to lay together like this, to just exist in the same space and hold each other.

Ilya stirred, then slid his right hand up Shane's chest under his shirt. He rested it there, stretched across Shane's ribs while his thumb occasionally brushed back and forth. He turned his face into Shane's chest, whispered something in Russian, then kissed a trail up from Shane's sternum to his neck. Shane turned his head to give him better access, then sighed as pleasurable tingles spread throughout his body.

Ilya pulled back and propped himself up on an elbow. “Hi,” he said with a lazy crooked smile, his eyes half-lidded as he was still waking up, looking entirely too beautiful this early in the morning. He pushed Shane's hair back off his forehead and held the side of his face.

“Hi,” Shane whispered back, leaning into Ilya's palm.

Ilya kissed him along his jaw, then more soft Russian words danced across Shane's skin.

“What did you say?” Shane asked.

“Good morning,” Ilya replied with a smirk. Then he tried to kiss Shane's mouth.

“Wait. Wanna brush my teeth first.”

Ilya stopped and just *looked* at him. “Are you serious?”

“What, are *you* serious? You kiss people with smelly morning breath?”

“Is not that bad. Just don't put your nose in my mouth and you will not notice.”

“If I don't, then I'm still gonna think about it. It's distracting.”

“Fine, fine,” Ilya conceded. He still stole one quick kiss to Shane's mouth before getting up.

“Asshole.” Shane tried to glare at him, but couldn't stop himself from smiling. *God*, he'd wanted this.

Shane did his morning arm stretches before Ilya passed him the sling and helped him sit up on the edge of the bed. “You think you will get good news from this doctor today?”

“Hope so,” Shane said, wincing at the headache that only intensified now that he was moving. “I've been consistent with the sling, so hopefully that means everything is healing correctly. I hope he'll tell me I can move it a bit more.”

He took his medications, then breathed through the throbbing pain, pinching his temples between his thumb and middle finger.

Ilya stood in between Shane's knees in those ridiculous Montreal sweatpants. He massaged his fingertips into Shane's scalp, making soothing circles all the way down to Shane's neck. Shane dropped his forehead onto Ilya's stomach and breathed deeply. He loved how Ilya seemed to do this automatically, comforting him without saying a word.

The doctor would arrive in about twenty minutes. Until then, Shane enjoyed the quiet domesticity of simple things like brushing their teeth together and starting the coffee pot. They'd have breakfast after the doctor left. Shane wasn't so nervous about having Ilya possibly be discovered; mostly he was worried about being distracted by the fact that the man he loved would be there in his bedroom, just behind the door, waiting for him.

Ilya sat alone in Shane's bedroom. It was strange, definitely, to be hiding away like this, but he kind of liked being able to sit in Shane's space. He scrolled through this phone a bit before he wandered around the room, looking out the windows, examining the photos on the wall more closely. Shane's parents looked super sweet; he'd seen them before at various events and award shows, but never met them. He tried not to get too far ahead of himself imagining that.

Ilya peeked in the closet only to see a number of painfully plain suits and sweaters all hanging in a neat row, then managed to show enough restraint to not also rifle through the drawers. Probably all team t-shirts and athletic wear, anyway.

The shelves had a few awards on them, some game pucks, and a handful of books. Jesus, did Shane *seriously* only read about hockey and fitness?

Holy shit, Ilya really had fallen in love with the most boring person in the world.

He flopped down across the bed, rubbed his palms into his eyes, then stared at the ceiling. How could he have let this happen? How had this annoying, horribly lame Canadian reeled him in like this?

He focused on listening to the muffled voices down the hall. The tone of the conversation sounded positive, with a few laughs here and there. The checkup must be going well. Shane and the doctor moved into the extra bedroom across the hall that Shane had converted into a workout space and yoga studio, probably to try different stretches and exercises for his arm.

Ilya continued listening. Without thinking about it, he sat himself right next to the door. He wanted to hear the doctor's advice and learn what was best for Shane's recovery. He also enjoyed just listening to Shane's voice. And as the doctor finished up with Shane back in the living room, giving Shane the final bullet points of what he should do for the next week, Ilya found himself taking notes on his phone, with the bedroom door cracked open so he could hear better. Just in case.

He heard Shane's footsteps come toward the door, alone, and Ilya stood up and shuffled back, trying to pretend that he hadn't been sitting right there waiting.

Shane threw the door open and went straight into Ilya's arms, messily crashing their faces together, kissing the hell out of him. He held onto Ilya's neck and pushed Ilya back against the nearest wall, then ground their hips together as Ilya wrapped his arms around him. Shane's intensity was unexpected, but Ilya quickly matched him, absolutely set on fire.

"Fuck, I need this," Shane whispered against Ilya's cheek, already breathless.

"The checkup made you feel horny?" Ilya asked, grinning.

"No, but it was fucking hot knowing you were in here. Couldn't stop thinking about you." Shane kissed him hard, and Ilya savored the hot slide of his tongue in his mouth.

"Oh? What were you imagining?" He slid his hand down Shane's stomach, teasing his fingertips into the waistband of his trim joggers.

"Just you. Here. Waiting for me," Shane whispered between fervent kisses.

"Maybe next time I get in your bed. Naked and hard. Wait for you like that."

"Oh *god*."

“What do you want to do? Tell me,” Ilya gripped Shane’s ass with both hands, suggestively pulling the muscles apart and as well as forcing their erections together.

“Shower,” Shane said, then he groaned softly. “Shower. I want to blow you. Then I need you to fuck me.”

Oh god. He’s going to ruin me.

“Mmf,” Ilya whimpered, then he nuzzled into Shane’s neck, kissing the soft, sensitive skin there, occasionally grazing it with his teeth. “And you will be okay? Won’t hurt you?”

“No, I promise. My head feels great, the meds kicked in. I’ll figure out what to do with my arm.”

“If you’re sure,” Ilya said, then he palmed Shane’s cock through his pants, drawing a delicious noise out of him as his eyes fluttered closed.

“I’m so fucking sure. Let’s go,” Shane said as he pulled on Ilya’s t-shirt and dragged him into the bathroom. He switched on the hot water and turned back to continue kissing as Ilya stripped them both of their clothes, mindfully removing Shane’s sling in the process.

They first rinsed off under the hot rainfall shower, then Shane immediately dropped to his knees in front of Ilya. He took Ilya’s cock in deep with no hesitation, sending pleasurable waves through Ilya’s body. Shane’s mouth made Ilya forget everything outside of this moment, and for a while things felt simple again. Ilya relaxed and enjoyed the determined way Shane always approached sucking him off. Shane’s hand traveled across Ilya’s body, exploring, starting from his ass, over his abs, then into his chest hair. He pinched and rolled the nipple just below Ilya’s tattoo, making Ilya gasp.

Ilya held Shane’s chin and pulled away. “Come here,” he said, then helped Shane stand up. He pressed Shane into the shower wall and wrapped his hand around Shane’s cock, gently brushing his thumb over the head. Shane hissed and dropped his head back, breathing hard already. Ilya loved how easy it was to get him worked up, panting and melting under his hands.

Ilya stepped away from Shane to both give them a chance to calm down and to get the shampoo. He poured some into his palms then went to work on Shane’s hair. One of Ilya’s most embarrassing recurring daydreams had been about exactly this, doing nothing more than rubbing suds into Shane’s scalp and watching him become a blissed out puddle.

Ilya rinsed the shampoo, quickly washed his own hair, then grabbed the bottle of body wash and slowly rubbed the soap all over Shane’s body, carefully avoiding his collarbone. He pressed and massaged into different muscles, running his hands up and down Shane’s arms, his chest and abs, then over his thighs. Ilya kissed him gently as he wrapped one slippery hand around Shane’s cock while the other slid over Shane’s ass, inching teasingly closer to Shane’s entrance.

“Fuck, I need you to touch me, Ilya. Come on,” Shane whimpered.

“Aw, so impatient,” Ilya teased, then he quickly obliged, first rinsing them both off. Ilya worked Shane’s cock and gently circled a fingertip around Shane’s rim, making Shane moan as his hips writhed and bucked against Ilya’s hands. Once he got Shane relaxed enough to slip a fingertip inside, Ilya pulled away. Shane sighed, still collapsed against the wall.

“All good?” Ilya asked.

Shane just nodded, eyes hazy, then ungracefully felt around with his good hand to shut off the water. Ilya kissed his mouth, cheek, then down his neck, brushing his lips across Shane’s intact collarbone. Ilya felt so in love, and Shane looked so beautifully debauched and irresistible, Ilya decided to do something he’d very rarely done with sexual partners.

“Turn around,” Ilya said. Shane gave him a questioning look, so Ilya maneuvered him to make Shane face the wall. He massaged deep circles into Shane’s back, slowly moving downward. He knelt down, kneaded the muscles of Shane’s impressive ass, and kissed the very top of the crease right in front of him. He traced his tongue down the middle, then slowly approached Shane’s entrance as he pulled Shane’s cheeks apart. Shane gasped and stilled.

Ilya lapped over Shane’s hole with long strokes of his tongue, turning Shane into a quivering mess, his moans echoing off the tile walls.

“Good?” Ilya asked, pausing.

“Fucking *great*.”

Ilya quietly chuckled and went back to work, swirling his tongue and adding pressure. It felt impossibly intimate. Crossing over new sexual territory with Shane only seemed right, now that Ilya could admit to himself the depths he felt toward Shane.

He was eventually able to work the tip inside of him, and Shane reached another plane, shaking and babbling out nonsense.

“Fuck, *fuck*. Ilya... Holy god. That’s amazing. Thank you. Fuck.”

Thank you? Ilya wanted to laugh, but instead his heart fluttered a bit. He loved Shane’s earnestness and honesty. He loved how much Shane loved this. He loved knowing exactly what to do to take Shane apart completely.

And apparently his reward for that was getting smashed in the face with Shane’s ass. Shane’s hips had suddenly jerked away from the wall and knocked Ilya back onto his heels.

“Aah! What the fuck, Hollander?”

“Sorry!”

Ilya rubbed his jaw and scowled at him. There was no way he could stay mad for long though, not when Shane looked down at him over his shoulder, genuinely concerned and totally adorable.

“I’m sorry!” Shane said again. “I was just... I didn’t want to come yet.”

Ilya rolled his eyes and stood up. “I guess that is a compliment.”

“It is,” Shane said quickly. He turned to face Ilya. “That felt incredible.”

“Good.” Ilya grabbed a towel and started drying Shane off.

“Did you, um... did you like doing that?”

Ilya nodded. “I did. Yes. Until you bashed me in the face. “

Shane looked like he was trying and failing to stifle a smile. He bit his lip adorably and Ilya snorted. Ilya moved in until their faces were just inches apart, then held his chin and kissed him. Shane seemed to hesitate for only a brief second before fully melting into the kiss, needy and desperate. Ilya ground his cock against Shane's hip.

“Please,” Shane whispered.

“Come on. Let's go.” They dried off and Ilya led Shane back to bed. “Get comfortable, whatever you need. With your arm.”

Shane set himself up in a position similar to how he had slept. Ilya gently covered him, leaning on one elbow, and held Shane's face to kiss him deeply.

“C'mon,” Shane pleaded.

Ilya looked around and Shane pointed to the bedside table. Ilya opened it and found a bottle of lube and just a handful of condoms, then paused.

“What?” Shane asked.

“No big stash of toys in here?”

“No.”

“No? Still just the one lonely dildo?”

“No,” but Shane blushed intensely, so probably *yes*.

“Where is it? Please. I'm dying to see it,” Ilya said, his smile so wide it almost hurt.

Shane slammed his head back against the pillow, eyes squeezed shut, exasperated. “Please shut up and fuck me,” he whined.

Ilya wasted no time getting himself slicked up and ready, then pushed Shane's knees back and pressed the head of his cock against Shane's entrance. “Tell me to stop if I need, yes? If there's a problem.”

“Yes,” Shane breathed. “C'mon. Please.”

Ilya drove into him and Shane cried out into the room, not at all worried about how loud he was.

“Oh, Shane. Yes. I want to hear it,” Ilya said. He moaned too, face slack, overwhelmed by finally fucking Shane after weeks of separation, finally seeing Shane's apartment and having him in his own bed. Just *seeing* him after Ilya had finally come to terms with how he truly felt about him, how much he loved him.

God damn it, Ilya really loved him.

Ilya slammed into Shane at an unforgiving pace, drops of sweat forming on his face. He braced himself with a hand on Shane's headboard, and Shane covered it with his own as Ilya fucked him harder. Shane lifted his legs and put his ankles on Ilya's shoulders, and Ilya leaned forward, sinking even deeper inside him.

“Shane. Fuck - I - holy shit. You're amazing, Shane. So fucking good.”

Shane could only respond with frantic, whimpering noises. He was definitely about to come. Even without any contact at all on his dripping cock, Ilya knew it was going to happen.

“You look like - are you going to come, Hollander?”

“Yeah,” Shane gasped.

“Oh fuck. Yes. Come on.”

Ilya continued his rapid, intense thrusts, keeping his eyes on Shane's dick. He watched Shane erupt onto his own chest, moaning loudly and holding on tight to Ilya's bicep.

“Shane...” Ilya gritted out, the only thing he could say as he was quickly sent over the edge, coming hard inside him. He stilled, and for a long moment they both stayed like that, panting and gazing at each other. Shane was gorgeous, all flushed pink and dazed, and Ilya's heart almost couldn't take it.

He wanted to tell Shane everything, he wanted to be honest. It was almost painful now, having those three forbidden words violently trying to escape him. It felt insane, but Ilya could have sworn that Shane looked like he was dangerously close to saying the words too. Before either of them could make that mistake, he put his hand on the side of Shane's face and kissed him, both of them breathing hard through their noses.

He gently slipped out and rolled to Shane's good side, propping his head up on his elbow. He took Shane's hand, brought it to his lips, and pressed soft kisses to his knuckles before lacing their fingers together. He rested their joined hands over Shane's heart.

“Holy shit,” was all Shane was able to say.

“Yeah,” Ilya agreed, catching his breath. “So you will introduce me to the dildo next time then, yes? Would be a fun addition.”

“Oh my god, fuck off. I'm not showing you that thing. You're only going to give me shit about it.”

“Why? Is it huge? Rainbow colored? Got crazy bumps and spikes on it?”

“No, it's... normal. Or whatever. You're not gonna see it, so leave me alone.”

Ilya leaned over him and looked him in the eyes. “No,” he said, then kissed him quickly and stood up. He got a few warm, damp washcloths, cleaned Shane up, then laid back down next to him. Shane blinked at him slowly, his eyes still seemed hazy, like he was starting to fade.

“Tired again?” Ilya asked.

“I think so. I sleep way too fucking much these days.”

“You are allowed to rest sometimes, you know that? Especially when you're trying to heal and shit.”

“Yeah, yeah... I know,” Shane grumbled. “I wanted to make breakfast though.”

“Is okay. We'll make it later.” How fucking cute was it that Shane was so worried about it.

“If you're hungry though, don't wait for me. Take anything you want.”

“Shhh.” Ilya looked at him fondly, then brushed soft kisses across his cheek. Shane's eyes closed. “You should sleep,” Ilya said. He turned to move off the bed, but then Shane grabbed his elbow.

“Would you... maybe stay with me? At least for a little bit,” Shane said shyly.

“Sure.” Ilya dragged the covers over both of them, and he cuddled close to Shane's chest. Shane kissed the top of his head then rested his hand in Ilya's curls, lightly stroking them and tugging at them.

Ilya had only spent about twenty-four hours with Shane now, and it already felt like too much. He had cheated Shane's honesty game this morning and told him the truth, hidden behind Russian words. The coward's way of confessing how much he loved waking up with Shane, and how much he wanted Shane to always be the first person he sees in the morning. Shane's gentle fingers playing with his hair had turned Ilya into someone he could barely recognize, desiring these soft, intimate touches even more than sex somehow.

Once Shane's hand stopped moving and Ilya was sure he was asleep, he gently extracted himself from the covers and snuck into the living room with his phone. He tried not to get his hopes up for more than a few days of this. Ilya had to face reality at some point, so for now, he would just enjoy the little time that he had.

listen I assume if anyone can just hold like an entire quarter of their body perfectly still during intense sex, that person is Shane Hollander 😂 it's the *discipline* lmao

Coming up next: the reason for the super long tag that literally hit the 100-character limit lol 😏

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Ilya extends his stay in Montreal.

Chapter Notes

Chapter theme songs - "All That I'm Craving" by Aidan Bissett, and "Here, There, and Everywhere" by The Beatles, depending on how sentimental you wanna get. :D

Time to get your copies of HR, because this chapter is kind of a "read-along"!

There are so many important conversations in Part 4 of HR that are key to developing the plot, Ilya and Shane as characters, and their relationship. It didn't feel right to "re-do" them, exclude them, or just paraphrase them for no real gain. So instead, the nearly same conversations are going to happen, just in a new context. In some places, I've left notes to indicate where a conversation should continue on as it did in the book.

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

Ilya dropped onto the couch in Shane's living room and stared at the ceiling.

Holy shit.

He spent an unknown amount of time like that, simply taking everything in. Absorbing the situation he'd found himself in, and wrestling with how terribly he wanted to stay with Shane, helping him and spending time with him.

Ilya would figure out a way to ask Shane about staying longer. Shane had to feel similarly, right? Otherwise why would he ask Ilya to come to his home? Or give him the hookup building keys to begin with?

To keep the daydreams from spiraling too far away from him, Ilya got curious about the rest of Shane's apartment. He started quietly snooping around, not being too invasive, but enough to learn more about Shane. He found a tiny laundry room, neatly-organized closets, the guest bathroom, and looked around the immaculate kitchen. *Jesus*, this guy was tidy.

Ilya suddenly felt compelled to ruin Shane's breakfast plans. He'd beat him to it.

Thirty minutes later, he had two plates of scrambled eggs with sauteed cherry tomatoes and spinach. Bagels were toasted and the one random avocado Ilya found was smashed and

seasoned.

Ilya heard movement from the bedroom, then the ensuite bathroom door opening and closing. He poured coffee for Shane, since the pot was still warm from earlier, and arranged everything on the little dining table by the windows just outside the kitchen. He also closed the curtains to dim the room, just in case. He felt oddly proud of himself. He kind of wanted to impress Shane.

He added that to the long list of new feelings that both surprised Ilya and slightly unnerved him. Even if Shane wasn't injured, he'd be happy to continue doing things like this for him.

Especially when Shane walked into the kitchen looking so soft and sleepy and happy to see Ilya. Just the sound of his bare feet padding across the wooden floor made Ilya's heart do funny things.

"Hi. Wow, you've been busy," Shane said, then hugged Ilya from the side and admired the spread.

"Hi." Ilya returned the hug with an arm around his waist, tucking his hand under the sling. He kissed him on the forehead. "Yes. Well. Figured I had some time to kill, so why not. Treat my host."

Shane's face went totally soft. "Aw. Thank you. This looks really good," he said as they sat down and started eating.

"I hope it is. I improvised, mostly. I hope you did not have plans for that lonely avocado."

"It's fine, I was planning to order groceries today anyway," he paused between bites, then looked down sheepishly at the table. "You can add to the order too, if you want. I don't know how long you can stay, or if you have to go back to Boston soon, but... um." Shane sighed. "You know, all day yesterday and this morning, I've been thinking of a way to say this, and I think I just need to say it. I'd like you to stay. If you can. If you want to. As long as you want."

Ilya was floored, momentarily speechless. Turned out it was that easy, to just say the thing he'd been dying to say from the moment he arrived in Montreal.

But Shane took the pause as a cue to ramble, apparently. "I mean, the injuries suck, and I know I'm not going to be, like, much fun a lot of the time. And it sucks that you'd have to just hide here, basically, but--"

"Shane," Ilya interrupted gently. He gave him a soft smile. "Yes. I will stay. I also want to stay. For as long as you want. I don't need to be in Boston for a while."

"Really?"

"Really." He reached over to take Shane's hand. "I already texted my housekeeping service to take the dairy out of the fridge."

Shane cracked up, his smile reaching his eyes, and there it was. One of the most compelling reasons to stay.

“So,” Shane said, his smile still dazzling. “Think about what to order. Tuna melt ingredients, maybe. Whatever you want.”

Ilya laughed too, so fucking relieved. He kissed the back of Shane's hand then let it go.

The next few days were not as pleasant. Shane's concussion headaches came back in full force, and had him confined to his dark living room for hours.

But Ilya was there for Shane. He stayed with him, comforted him, and cooked for him. From his bed in the mornings, Shane could even hear Ilya sweeping and cleaning through the bedroom door and his heart almost couldn't take it.

Ilya also held Shane's hand while they watched the playoffs together, Ilya watching and Shane listening to the commentators with his eyes closed and an ice pack on his head and shoulder. Shane felt so comforted and loved he nearly teared up underneath the ice pack on his face.

One morning, after Shane had left for a physical therapy session, he'd come back to individual smoothie portions prepped in the freezer. Ilya shyly explained that he'd remembered Shane mentioning the blender was too loud with his headaches, so he'd spent the morning blending all the fresh and frozen fruit from the grocery order. Shane had kissed him and rolled his body against him, and realized he wanted so much more from Ilya than he'd thought.

Because even through the slow, painful days, Ilya stayed. He cared, and he stayed.

A few days later

Ilya hid in the shadows. He tugged his ball cap down and his hood further forward again. He sat on a park bench between streetlights and looked down at his shoes whenever someone passed, usually some late-night runner or cyclist.

Although he had already been in Shane's apartment for a few days, he hadn't quite felt the need to get out, or that he was trapped there. Something about staying with Shane was comforting by itself. Ilya didn't want to be anywhere else, but it *was* exciting to be outside with him.

He'd managed to stay active by working out in Shane's spare bedroom turned yoga studio. As soon as Ilya had told Shane that he would stay for a while, Shane had ordered a stationary bike, a workout bench, and a set of modular dumbbells for him. It was so fucking sweet and considerate, Ilya had nearly said something that he wouldn't have been able to take back.

They had done some workouts together in the past week, chatting and listening to music, though it was usually just some light cycling and stretching for Shane when he could. They swiftly discovered that watching each other work out was heady foreplay, so that had certainly encouraged them both to keep up some kind of fitness routine.

Today Shane had felt more energetic than usual, so they'd decided to go out for an evening walk in a huge city park not too far from Shane's apartment. They'd considered the risks of taking a trip outside, and realized that once Ilya was actually out of the building, it would be pretty easy to avoid people and potential recognition. The hilltop in the center of the park was big with both locals and tourists, so Shane had Ilya drive them to the quieter, less popular side that had numerous paths and trails through a forest.

Now Ilya was near a park entrance leading to a thick forest, waiting for Shane. He was watching him, brightly illuminated inside a tiny ice cream shop across the street, smiling and making small talk with the clerk. Ilya felt warm just seeing him out in public and in his element, so polite and personable.

Shane was truly beloved by Montreal. It was one thing to hear the hockey arena roar for him, but it was entirely another for Ilya to *see* it like this up close. He got to witness first hand how much Shane meant to these fans on a personal level. Ilya was fairly recognizable in Boston, sure, but it was nothing like this. Hockey wasn't even in the top three most popular sports in Boston, probably.

Shane pushed his back against the glass exit door while the clerks smiled and waved goodbye, then crossed the road holding an ice cream cone and a small cup. His expression brightened as he approached and Ilya couldn't help how his heart tingled at that.

"Jesus, this town loves you," Ilya said. "I thought maybe they would not let you leave, trap you in the basement instead."

Shane huffed and handed him the cone holding vanilla ice cream with millions of tiny chocolate chips and big swirls of caramel. "Definitely seems like that, sometimes. These guys are just really friendly, though. I stop by here with my parents sometimes when we want to get out and walk around."

"The ice cream is really good. What did you get?" Ilya asked, eyeing Shane's much smaller, healthier-looking portion in the bowl.

"Just vanilla with strawberries. I like that they mix in fresh fruit."

"Do you ever eat anything unhealthy? Like what is junk food for Shane Hollander? White bread instead of wheat?" Ilya teased.

"Fuck off," Shane laughed. "I eat junk food. Sometimes. Not often," he conceded.

"Yeah? Like what?"

"Like, burgers and stuff! Normal things. Like, um. Peanut butter?"

Ilya scoffed. "Protein smoothies don't count." Shane shoved his shoulder.

As they walked further into the darkness and ate their desserts, Ilya asked more about Shane's parents. He vaguely knew who they were, only from seeing them from a distance at special NHL events. When Shane described them, it was clear how much he loved and admired them. They seemed like the loveliest people. Even if McGill sounded fake as hell.

Shane revealed that he was nervous about coming out to his parents. Even though he'd only said kind words about them, something made him worried about telling them the truth. Ilya knew it wasn't *his fault* exactly, but he felt bad for complicating Shane's feelings about his sexuality. Shane didn't deserve to go through that, especially when Ilya only wanted to provide him comfort.

While they slowly strolled along a completely abandoned stretch of trail, Ilya took a chance. He took Shane's hand and slid their fingers together. Shane inhaled a small gasp, then grinned up at Ilya, his smile blindingly beautiful even through the darkness. Shane squeezed Ilya's hand.

Ilya quickly scanned the area around them, ensuring they were still alone. He stood in front of Shane, then gently took his face with both hands.

"What are you-" was all Shane could say before Ilya's mouth was on his, soft and affectionate. Shane hesitated, then relaxed against Ilya's body, his hand traveling up Ilya's spine. Ilya took in Shane's warmth, the scent of strawberries, the softness of his lips and the smooth hair under his fingertips. It was their first kiss in public and Ilya poured an apology into it.

"I'm sorry," Ilya said, leaning his forehead against Shane's. "For making things... difficult. Difficult with your parents. You shouldn't have to deal with that. Because of me."

"It's okay. I mean, there aren't a lot of... options, I suppose." He hummed a small laugh. "Turns out I actually like dealing with *you*, so."

Ilya laughed and kissed him on the cheek. "Lucky me."

"Fucking right. Really though," he sighed and pulled Ilya's cap back down low, since he'd accidentally displaced it during their kiss. "I would like you to meet my parents. Someday."

Ilya's heart swelled. "Me too. Someday."

"You should leave it. At least for a little while? It looks really nice, actually."

"You sure? It looks like too much," Ilya said as he examined himself in Shane's bathroom mirror, shifting around to look at his beard from different angles.

"I mean. Up to you, but this definitely looks really good to me," Shane said, standing behind Ilya and looking at him in the mirror over his shoulder.

“Well. I guess that's important,” Ilya grumbled, and Shane snorted. “Fine, I’ll just clean it up for now.”

Ilya had tacked on an electric trimmer to their most recent delivery. He’d forgotten his own at home in his rush to leave Boston, and Shane didn’t have one. Shane knew he wanted to return to his classic lazy stubble look, but he really didn’t want to see the fuller beard disappear yet. Not when it had felt so nice against his thighs last night...

Afterwards, Shane was sitting at the little breakfast table covered in delivery bags when his phone buzzed.

Rose: *How are you? How’s your head?*

Shane: *Getting better. I can watch tv without sunglasses now.*

Rose: *But watching tv with sunglasses on is COOL!*

Shane replied with the sunglasses face emoji.

Rose: *Do you have a hot male nurse taking care of you?*

Shane looked up at Ilya, who was in the kitchen, humming to himself and unpacking the grocery delivery. At the moment, he was gazing into the fridge with a container of strawberries in hand, looking for space, looking unfairly rugged and gorgeous. Shane cracked up. *Basically, yes* he wanted to tell Rose.

Ilya looked over at him with a raised eyebrow. “What?” he asked with an amused half-smile.

“Nothing. Just Rose.”

Ilya snorted. “What does Rose want?”

(Ch 24 conversation continues...)

(Author note: the bonfire conversation about Irina was the big one that I couldn't figure out how to place in this “stay in Montreal” context... let's assume it took place somewhere here between these two other scenes. thanks y'all)

“Don’t tell me this is the same book you told me about on Skype. Is it really?” Ilya asked, grinning and thumbing through the pages of a book titled *Cold War* in big, dramatic letters.

Shane huffed as he laid back into his pillow nest. “Maybe. So what if it is?”

“Some old hockey series did not keep your interest like you thought it would?” Ilya asked as he flipped to the page with Shane’s bookmark. It was exactly as boring as he’d expected.

“Well, I got kind of busy soon after that call, if you remember. A little injured and ordered by doctors to avoid reading.”

“Aw. Let’s see, then. I would hate for your knowledge of ancient hockey to get rusty.” Ilya said. He laid down across the bed and put his head on Shane’s lap, holding the book up over his chest.

“*Their absence of facial expression - actually a form of Soviet correctness - contributes to the disparaging “robot” image we’ll soon hang on them,*” Ilya read out, laughing. “Wow, that is such a nice description. Scary Russian robots.”

“Are you joking?” Shane said as he played with Ilya’s hair, lightly combing through the curls and looping them around his fingers. “He’s not wrong. You guys like, never smile.”

“Oh. Is that so?” Ilya asked with faux disbelief. He knew full well it was the truth.

“Yeah. Your team in Junior’s, in Sochi. A bunch of other guys in the league. Straight faces and no expressions all the time. Well. Except for you, I guess. With your little smile when you’re about to give me shit.” Shane tugged on one lock of hair.

“Ow! Fucker. Not our fault Americans and Canadians like to be fake happy and smiley all the time. Russians don’t have energy to pretend every minute of the day. Must be tiring for you.”

Shane snorted. “Sure. I’m exhausted,” he deadpanned.

“Ah. The real reason you are so sleepy all the time.” He grinned at Shane’s scowl and continued reading. “*‘But in fact, the Soviet players are feeling the tension as much as any mortal. Tretiak’s knees are shaking inside his heavy pads.*” Wow. Romantic. Are you asleep yet? Is your boring bedtime story working?”

“Come on, it’s not that boring.”

“Oh,” he said as he leaned up to return the book to the nightstand. “Yes, it is.” He kissed Shane quickly on the lips, then laid his head back down on Shane’s lap.

Ilya looked at the ceiling and reached above his head to hold Shane’s hand laying on the pillow pile. He lightly squeezed Shane’s fingers, then slowly brushed his thumb up along each of the digits. The book reminded him of this ridiculous plan that he couldn’t get his brain to stop working on.

For the last few days, especially in the hours when Shane was resting and Ilya had too much time to think, he’d been desperately trying to envision a way to actually be with Shane, for them to be together. It seemed impossible, but there had to be something.

“You all right?” Shane asked, circling his fingers into Ilya’s chest hair. Ilya held Shane’s forearm.

“Hm? Yes, fine. Just, this feels nice.”

“*You looked like you were thinking about something heavy.*”

Ilya shrugged. "Sometimes I wish I had been drafted by a Canadian team."

(Ch 25 conversation continues...)

Shane noticed that Ilya no longer asked where things were in the kitchen, and just that fact made his heart feel oddly floaty. Ilya moved around as if he were in his own home, comfortable and confident, knowing exactly where to find things. He was getting ingredients together for sandwiches, some new melt recipe with turkey.

Shane's imagination got the better of him. Wondering what it would be like to actually live together, or even play together. *Or get married?* Fuck, it was ridiculous. He knew Ilya hadn't been serious about marrying Svetlana when he'd mentioned it yesterday. But hearing him just say the M word had his mind spinning out of control.

He tore his eyes away from Ilya before he got too far ahead of himself. He looked down at the jigsaw puzzle on the dining table his dad had given him to help with the boredom.

In the other room, a western conference playoff game was on TV. Goal horns sounded and the commentators excitedly shouted about a game-saving play from a Vancouver forward.

After Ilya slid the pan of sandwiches into the oven and closed the door, he leaned against the counter behind him. He folded his arms and stared into the oven. It looked like he was working something out, his jaw clenching as he rubbed his thumb over the knuckles of his other fingers.

"I was thinking," Ilya said, then took a sip of his beer. "If I played for a team that was not Boston. Maybe in the west. The rivalry would not be such a big deal."

((other) Ch 25 conversation continues...)

Ilya woke up feeling warm. Both in his chest, and all around. One heavy arm was wrapped around him and he was pressed against a smooth, muscular torso.

"Shane Hollander loves me" rang through his mind, repeating again and again on loop. I love Shane and he loves me back. Shane fucking Hollander loves me back.

He was over the moon. He wasn't sure how long it would take to fully come to terms with it. Ilya hadn't known he could be this happy.

As they settled into bed last night, Shane had detailed his grand scheme: Ottawa, the charity, citizenship... and finally being together. For real. And he came up with this plan *because he loved Ilya*.

He turned his head and kissed the soft skin of Shane's chest in front of him, and Shane tightened his arm around him as he inhaled deeply. Ilya ran his hand up and down Shane's

body, from his thigh to his neck, anywhere he could touch. He felt Shane press soft kisses to the top of his head.

Ilya moved to cover Shane's body with his own, propping himself up on one elbow. He looked at his crinkled, beaming face, and finally, the love that inflated Ilya's chest made him happy and hopeful instead of tortured.

"Hi," Ilya said, brushing his fingers through Shane's hair.

"Hi," Shane replied. "I love you."

"I love you too." Ilya grinned widely. "And I'm going to kiss you and I kind of don't care if you grumble at me about brushing teeth."

Shane cracked up. "Okay."

Ilya held his face and trailed his thumb over Shane's bottom lip, then over the freckles on his cheek. "*God*, I fucking love you," he whispered, then dove into the kiss. It was beautifully imperfect, full of energy and warmth. "I'm so happy I can say it."

"I love you so much. I'm so happy too." Shane slid his fingers into Ilya's hair and held him close, kissing him again and again.

"Do you have to go somewhere today? Doctors?" Ilya asked.

"No, not until tomorrow."

"Good. Because I'm keeping you in this bed all day. Come on. Get your toothbrush."

May

Ilya hauled his larger duffle bag over his shoulder and kept his head down in the brightly lit parking garage. He'd gone back to Boston for a few days for team PR and sponsorship obligations, and used the trip to restock some of his personal things to bring back to Montreal. Shane still needed to stay in the city for checkups, but the plan was to head out to his cottage as soon as he was cleared to go.

He'd also brought Shane a pair of sweatpants garishly covered in Boston Bears logos as a thank you for loaning him the silly Montreal pajamas when he'd first arrived. An annoying gag gift for Shane's birthday.

Over the last few weeks, they'd developed a solid routine, despite the odd arrangement of Ilya basically confined to the apartment. They had spent a healthy amount of time apart, doing their own things separately, and they'd chanced a few evening trips out to parks around Montreal. Ilya was definitely looking forward to seeing the cottage though, ever since he saw that monstrosity on TV months ago.

He snuck into Shane's apartment building and used his newly-copied keys to quietly open the door since it was just after midnight.

“Hey,” Shane's voice called from down the hall.

“Hi. You are awake still?” Ilya called back. He took off his shoes and set his things down.

“Yeah. I wanted to wait for you. I have kind of a surprise.”

“Oh? Have you been-”

Shane appeared in front of him with a huge grin on his face. He extended both arms out to the side, then dropped them. “I got really good news today. Surprise.”

“Oh shit! No sling!” Ilya rushed forward to him. He grabbed Shane's face with both hands, kissed him hard, then flung his arms around Shane's chest in a giant hug. He lifted Shane off the ground a bit, and Shane clung to Ilya's shoulders. Shane held him *so tightly* and it felt *so good*.

“Congratulations.”

“Thank you. It feels so nice to finally do this.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too. So fucking much.”

Ilya carried him into the bedroom, Shane's legs wrapped around Ilya's waist, then dropped him onto the bed.

“I think we should celebrate,” Ilya purred.

“Me too. Come here.”

Ilya flung his t-shirt off and pounced on Shane, kissing him intensely, so excited to see him healthy again. Shane's hands traveled across Ilya's body and held him close, uninhibited at last.

Chapter End Notes

The hockey book that Ilya read from is real and so are the quotes - “Cold War” by Roy MacSkimming

Coming up next: Yuna and David 😊😊😊

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Shane has surprise guests 😊

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Shane woke up before Ilya, as usual, so he went down to the apartment gym for a run on the treadmill before coming back to make coffee and breakfast. He showered quickly and started slicing tomatoes and avocado while the pan heated up for fried eggs.

Sleepy footsteps approached from behind, then Shane was suddenly surrounded by Ilya. His arms looped around Shane's torso and his head sat heavy on Shane's shoulder. Shane put down the knife and scratched the back of Ilya's neck, playing with the curls that rested there.

"Good morning."

"*Dobroye utro*," Ilya replied.

"Do-bro-ye ootro?"

"Mhmm. Yes," Ilya said, then kissed Shane's neck. "Good morning." Ilya shuffled over to the toaster and wordlessly put in two bagels for them. Shane loved how normal it felt to have Ilya around like this, like he was a part of his home, not just a guest anymore.

"Do we have big plans today?" Ilya asked as he poured himself coffee.

Shane wiped his hands, then hugged Ilya, who was shirtless and looking effortlessly beautiful, and pressed him against the counter. "Yeah, of course. There's uh... a movie to watch." He continued listing nonsense things as he kissed up Ilya's jaw. "Then we'll take a nap, maybe. I might read for a bit. Cook stuff. Then we could sit around. Maybe have sex. There's really so much to do, you know?"

"Very busy. I thought this was vacation."

"I know. It's stressful."

"Maybe I can take your mind off things."

Shane grinned at their dumb jokes, but he was so fucking happy. It was still hard to believe he could feel this happy. He kissed Ilya deeply, standing on his toes and leaning on him, wrapping his arms around Ilya's neck.

“I love you,” he said, still celebrating the fact that he could finally say it out loud.

“I love you too. You think we can reschedule some parts of your plan? Maybe we can move one of those things up, I think it’s urgent.” Ilya slid his hand into the back of Shane’s shorts and squeezed his ass firmly.

“Oh really? Which one?” Shane asked, playing along. He rolled his hips against Ilya’s as arousal flooded through him.

“Reading your hockey book,” Ilya replied, then he bent to pick Shane up and place him on the countertop of the kitchen island. Shane hooked his legs tightly around Ilya’s waist, locking his ankles together, and they kissed again, hungry and intense. Ilya rucked up Shane’s shirt, grazing his hands up and down his back, then over his thighs. His thumbs brushed tantalizingly close to Shane’s cock. Shane held him close, appreciating the firm muscles of his shoulders and arms.

In the other room, Shane’s phone vibrated on the coffee table.

“Uh-oh.” Ilya smirked.

“It’s fine, I don’t need to answer it.”

“No.” Ilya turned away from Shane to switch off the unused burner, as if he knew Shane would be worried about it, then quickly stripped off Shane’s t-shirt. He wrapped his big hands around Shane’s chest and kissed him, then kissed down his neck. He took one sensitive nipple into his mouth and lightly bit it, making Shane moan, then soothed over it with his tongue. Ilya kissed a trail over to the other and did the same, while Shane’s fingers tangled into his messy morning curls.

Shane’s phone rang again. He tilted his head in its direction. “Fuck off,” he yelled at whoever it was on the other end.

Ilya laughed and continued kissing down Shane’s abs, running his tongue along the lines between the muscles. He gently pushed Shane back to lay him down on the kitchen island. He found an oven mitt nearby and tossed it next to him. “For your head.”

“Aw. Thanks.” Shane grinned at how fucking sweet that was and rested his head on the oven mitt instead of the hard counter. Ilya stripped off Shane’s shorts and underwear, then went back to kissing down his stomach. Shane hooked his legs over Ilya’s shoulders and moaned as Ilya licked up his cock, then took him fully into his mouth.

Ilya continued sucking him slowly for what seemed like ages before Shane got impatient. He needed to touch Ilya too. “Come here,” he gritted out, pushing sections of Ilya’s hair away from his face so he could really look at him. “Kiss me.”

And he did. Shane sat up and Ilya kissed him and it was warm and wonderful and loving. Shane managed to push the rest of Ilya’s clothes down off his hips, then took his rigid cock in hand. Ilya sighed, then did the same to Shane.

“You like this, Hollander?”

“Yes. Yeah I... I’ve wanted this for so long.”

“Wanted what? Tell me.”

“You. Here. Like this. Now that I'm finally healed.”

Ilya sucked in a breath. “What do you want me to do to you?”

“Anything. I don’t know. Everything.”

“Tell me one thing.” Ilya started moving his hips, fucking into Shane’s hand.

“I... thought about you... fucking me... well. Everywhere. Every room. On all the furniture. Or... against the window at night.” He turned bright red, the blush even extending down his neck, and Ilya smiled.

“Fuck, Hollander. You only had to ask.”

Shane gasped as Ilya stroked faster over Shane’s slick cock. It wasn’t long before Shane was whimpering and twitching, getting close.

“Maybe I’ll push you right up against the window. I’ll fuck you from behind. Out in the open, in front of your whole city, and no one can see us.”

“Oh fuck. Fuck, Ilya.”

“Come for me, Shane,” Ilya commanded.

“Ahh, fuck-” Shane whined, then he cried out as he came, coating his own stomach. Ilya wasn’t far behind, groaning into Shane’s neck and snapping his hips faster. Shane stroked him through his orgasm, Ilya’s release joining Shane’s own. Ilya fell forward onto Shane, resting an elbow on the counter, panting.

“Wow. What the fuck?” Shane laughed breathlessly, laying back down.

Ilya smiled and kissed Shane’s chest. “I don’t know. Couldn’t help it.” He helped Shane up and off the countertop. “What happened to breakfast? I thought you were cooking. What’s taking so long?” he asked, as he wiped Shane’s belly with a paper towel.

“I don’t know. I got distracted, I guess.” Shane grinned and kissed Ilya again. Just because he could.

“I guess so.”

Shane quickly rinsed off in the shower, then left Ilya to bathe himself. He got dressed, wiped down the countertop and started up on breakfast again, turning on the burner once more and re-warming the toasted bagels. He got two plates out, started assembling their bagel sandwiches with sliced veggies, then fried two eggs and reheated Ilya’s forgotten cup of

coffee. After that, he got out two small bowls, added yogurt and berries, and felt damn pleased with himself about how nice the breakfast looked. He knew he didn't *need* to impress Ilya with hospitality, but it still felt good to do this for him.

He poured himself a cup of coffee, then went over to finally check his phone.

His stomach dropped as he saw who called. At the same time, as if by fate, there was a knock on his front door. The hair on the back of his neck stood on end.

Oh god. Oh fuck. No no no no, oh no. Oh my fucking god.

The calls were from his mother. He was supposed to meet his parents for lunch today. And Shane had completely forgotten.

Fuck!

He tried to think quickly and come up with a lie to send his parents away, maybe to a restaurant nearby, but his brain was absolutely paralyzed. He felt stuck, frozen, staring at another incoming call from Mom as another knock at the door went straight to his core.

He heard keys in the lock. His parents had extra copies and didn't usually come in unexpectedly, but to their credit, they had tried to contact him in advance.

He forced himself to move and meet them in the entryway, his entire body feeling cold.

"Shane?" his mother called as she opened the door a crack. "You there? We tried calling..." The door swung open and there they were.

"Hi..." Shane said, trying and probably failing to put on a delighted face and conceal his nerves.

Mom greeted him warmly, then walked up to him and hugged him, suddenly serious. "Shane, what on earth? We tried to call you a hundred times, what happened?"

Shane looked over her shoulder and made eye contact with his dad as he closed the front door. Shane could see the concern in his face too, before it morphed into a gentle smile.

"Nothing! I'm sorry. I just... got caught up in something."

Mom pulled back and put her hands on his arms. "It's so good to see you doing better. Oh, congratulations on getting out of the sling! That must feel so good."

"Yeah, um. It's been great."

"You're still careful though, right? That doesn't mean you're out of the woods yet. You still have to rest, you're still healing."

"I know, mom. I'm careful." It might have been a slight lie, considering how borderline acrobatic the celebration sex had been with Ilya recently.

In the momentary break in conversation, it turned out the running water from the shower in Shane's bathroom was audible from here, especially with the bedroom door open, and this might have been the absolute worst time to discover that fact.

"Oh goodness. Sorry. Were you about to take a shower?" Mom asked.

"No," Shane said stupidly.

Both Mom and Dad looked momentarily confused, and Shane attempted to lie. Poorly.

"I mean, yeah. I just. Finished some cardio in the gym."

Mom pushed his hair back and looked at him softly, unconvinced. "Are you sure you're doing okay here by yourself? You seem... off. I don't know. You're still on top of your meds, right? Is your head okay?" She put the back of her hand on his forehead.

"Yeah. Mom, I'm fine. I promise."

"We brought some dinners for you too." She took a tote bag from Dad. "Hopefully that'll help things. You can keep them in the freezer and just heat them up whenever." She started to head into the kitchen.

"Thank you! Why don't I..." Shane reached out for the bag, but Mom held onto it and kept heading towards the kitchen. "I can take them. I'll put them away. Are you hungry after the drive? We can go out to that burger place nearby. I'll just-... Let's-" he tried, fruitlessly.

Mom paused at the entrance to the kitchen after Shane unsuccessfully tried to intercept her. She was very clearly eyeing the two identical plates of breakfast.

"Are you...?" was about all Mom could say before she was interrupted by a deep, Russian-accented voice coming from Shane's shower.

"Shane! Where did you put that soap? You bought new one, yes?"

Oh my fucking god. Shane's blood ran cold. He wanted a pit to open underneath him and swallow him up. *Great fucking timing, Ilya.*

Mom turned and glared at him, confused eyebrows high up on her forehead. "Someone's... here with you? *Do you have a guest?*" she hiss-whispered.

It felt like Shane's entire body was a million degrees. His face must be bright, beet red. "No. Um. Kinda? Yes? Listen, can we sit down? I can explain."

Shane took the bag of food and put it on the (recently fucked-on) counter, then led her to the living room where Dad stood with a similarly confused, maybe slightly embarrassed face. What the fuck kind of normal "guest" would shower with the bathroom door open anyway? His parents already knew *something* was up; he should just run in and tell Ilya to wait.

"I mean, it's okay Shane," Mom said. "We don't want to intrude, we just didn't know." Dad mumbled something similar in agreement.

“No, it’s okay. It’s not your fault, I should have told you.” He was panicking, frantically trying to think of a way out of this. “We can... just. Go out, now. To lunch. I’ll meet you-”

Dad hadn’t said much of anything up to this point, but he did find a way to horrify Shane even more than Shane thought possible. There was a forgotten laundry basket on one of the living room chairs containing clean, neatly folded clothes. It just so happened that the t-shirt on top of the pile was one of Ilya’s with a huge Boston Bears logo printed across it. Dad picked it up and looked at it curiously.

Shane now noticed the shower had been shut off.

“Um, yeah. That was from, um. A prank. From one of the guys, you know.” This was the most un-smooth Shane had ever been in his life.

“Yeah,” Dad finally said. “Yuna, why don’t we go to that, um. Burger place across the way? Shane, you can finish up with your... friend.” He looked like he was trying to avoid the awkwardness as much as Shane was.

Mom glared at the Bears t-shirt, not buying the prank lie at all. “Shane, what on earth is going on?” Mom whispered.

“*Shane?*” said Ilya’s voice again. *Oh shit.* “Where did you go?” Ilya called out into the apartment, his voice and footsteps getting closer to the living room. Shane couldn’t find the strength to move. His parents didn’t move either. He could only stand and watch as this personal horror show unfolded in front of him. Ilya continued, “Shane, didn’t you buy a new soap? Where did you-”

Ilya turned the corner into the living room (thank fucking *god* he was wearing a towel around his waist) and only then noticed that Shane wasn’t alone.

And for a quiet moment, nobody moved. Nobody spoke. Everyone. Just. *Stared.*

Shane wanted to disappear. He’d had a plan. He knew he wanted to tell his parents that he was gay, maybe even at this lunch they’d planned today. He wanted to tell them that he was in love. And then after that, he’d finally reveal his biggest secret.

And now everything was chaotically happening all at once.

Everyone continued to just stare at each other. His parents stared in shock at Ilya, wondering why the fuck he was here. They joined Ilya in staring at Shane, looking for answers. And Shane could only look back at each of them, terrified and panicked.

On the one hand, he knew he should try to take control of the situation and come clean. On the other, Ilya stood there looking so impossibly gorgeous with his damp curls and bare muscular chest, it was hard to think straight, concussion aside.

“Hi,” Ilya tried.

Both Mom and Dad glanced between Ilya and Shane. Mom looked desperate to understand what the fuck was happening. Her mouth opened to speak, but nothing came out.

“I will. Put clothes on,” Ilya said eventually. For someone who usually exuded confidence, it was weird to see Ilya uncomfortable. This was entirely new territory for him too, and definitely not how *he* envisioned meeting Shane’s parents, Shane was sure. He turned on his heel and headed back to the bedroom, softly closing the door behind him.

“Yeah...” Shane said, dazed. He sat down on the nearest chair and covered his face with his hands. He took deep breaths, but it didn’t help to slow down his heart absolutely pounding in his chest.

He heard his parents sit on the couch. Maybe a minute passed. Maybe an hour passed. Shane’s mind was reeling.

“Shane?” Mom said quietly.

Shane stood up and avoided looking at them. “I’m gonna... One minute.”

He walked back toward his bedroom door and took a deep breath before he went in. Ilya deserved answers as much as his parents did.

Ilya was fully clothed now in jeans and a t-shirt, staring out of the windows with his hands on his hips.

“Ilya...” Shane started, but he really didn’t know what he was going to say.

“What the *fuck*, Hollander?” He turned around, and thankfully didn’t look or sound angry. He seemed just as surprised and unsure and embarrassed as Shane was. “Seriously. How the fuck did this happen?”

Shane sat on his bed with his face in his hands again and groaned. “Oh *god* ... It’s... You know those phone calls earlier? That I ignored?”

“Oh,” Ilya said after a beat.

“Yeah. I forgot... that, um.” He rubbed his face and ran his hands through his hair, then closed his eyes. He dropped his head into his hands. “I forgot we’d planned to have lunch today. They wanted to see me now that I don’t need the sling,” he finally said in a small, quiet voice.

“That’s... kind of a big thing to forget,” Ilya said neutrally. Just stating a fact.

“Yeah, well. I might have been... distracted.”

“It’s *my* fault?” Ilya asked, and thank god, Shane could hear his smile as he said that. If Ilya had been upset about this, Shane would have been totally lost.

Shane felt Ilya’s hands on his shoulders. Ilya was standing right in front of him and Shane collapsed into him, wrapping his arms around him and burying his face into Ilya’s stomach.

“I’m so sorry,” Shane said into Ilya’s shirt. “*Fuuuuck* ...”

“It's okay, Shane. It's okay.” Ilya's hands rubbed across Shane's shoulders, into his hair, and down his back.

“It's fucked. Oh my god, it's all fucked. What am I gonna do?” he groaned.

“It will be okay. They are *your* parents. You know them. You said they are good. The best. You wanted to tell them someday, yes?”

Shane took another deep breath and exhaled into Ilya's shirt.

“And now they know. They already know, so now... you can just explain. Talk to them.”

Shane squeezed his eyes shut and held on tighter to Ilya's waist. “You're right. *Fuck*. I know you're right. It's just...”

“Really fucking awkward?”

“Yes!” Shane cried, looking up miserably at Ilya, whose face seemed way too fucking amused right now. “Why the fuck are you smiling?”

“Maybe they did not recognize me. Tell them I'm a random Russian guy you found in Montreal,” he said with a huge grin.

“They saw your Bears t-shirt out there. And your tattoo.”

“So I'm a random guy with good taste in hockey. And tattoos.”

Shane couldn't help but mirror Ilya's smile. The situation was ridiculous, but in a way it was a relief. Now that there wasn't any choice, it was easier for Shane to accept that he just needed to come clean.

Shane stood, and hyped himself up. “Okay. I'll talk to them. Yeah. I'll just explain. Fuck, what the fuck am I going to tell them?”

“Do you want me to come with you?”

Did Shane want that? He was surprised by the offer, and also worried it would make things even more awkward. It would be nice to have Ilya's support, though.

“I don't know. Would you really do that?”

Ilya took his hand and squeezed. “Yes. If it helps.”

Shane nodded, then said, “No. It'll just make things weird. Maybe you should wait here.”

Ilya raised an eyebrow at him.

“No,” Shane said. “No, nevermind. Come on.”

Ilya held Shane's face between his big hands and kissed him gently. “It will be okay. I love you. They love you. Now just... explain.”

“I love you too,” Shane replied. “Okay. Let's do this. Just... Let me do the talking.”

“No problem.”

Shane paused at the bedroom door. He took a breath and put his hand on the door handle. “I am so fucking glad you were wearing that towel,” Shane whispered with his eyes closed.

Ilya burst out laughing, making Shane laugh too. “Oh my *god*, me too.” Ilya gave him a quick hug from behind and kissed his cheek.

Feeling better after that, Shane left the safety of the bedroom with Ilya following close behind.

Mom and Dad were still sitting on the couch. They turned to look at him, then immediately locked their eyes onto Ilya over Shane's shoulder.

“Mom. Dad. I... think we should talk.”

“We tried to call you before,” Dad said, sounding shell shocked. “We didn't know you had... Company.”

“Dad, it's okay. I'm sorry. You guys...shouldn't have found out this way.”

“Found out what, exactly?” Mom asked, still staring at Ilya as if he were a threat.

Out of his parents' view, Shane felt Ilya put his hand on his lower back, comforting and reassuring.

“Well, I...I'm gay. Which I was going to tell you. Soon. Today, I think. At lunch. I just...sorry. I wish I'd told you.”

His parents didn't say anything.

“Um. And this is... Ilya. Rozanov. You probably know that.”

“Hi,” Ilya tried again.

“And he's been... visiting. Helping me recover. He's... We're, um.”

Fuck. What *were* they? Everything was still so new, they hadn't stopped to figure out a label yet.

“*Lovers*,” Ilya offered.

Fuck, way to choose the grossest possible word, Ilya.

Well, there was no going back from that word. Shane could only wait for the aftermath.

“*But...you hate him*,” Mom said.

“*No, I...I don't. I mean. Sometimes I do, kinda. But mostly I...love him. Actually.*”

(Ch 26 conversation continues)

As they faced Yuna Hollander's interrogation, Ilya felt overwhelmingly relieved.

Eventually, Shane's parents' shock had waned into something more like genuine curiosity, then sympathy. Ilya could see that each of their questions came from a place of love. They loved their son, and they just wanted to understand him. Shane was right - they really were the best.

Ilya enjoyed seeing the similarities between Shane and his parents, and so clearly seeing where Shane got a number of his traits. His love of hockey from both, his unwavering determination from his mom, his quiet thoughtfulness from his dad. The mix of facial features and expressions that Shane had gotten from each of them.

Ilya also got the distinct vibe that his parents had definitely cursed Ilya's name numerous times over the years, and it wasn't going to be easy for them to suddenly stop hating him. He was sure they'd need time. It was true that Ilya hadn't always been the kindest person to their son.

But now, Shane had his head between his knees, breathing through lightheadedness. As Ilya sat on the floor, held his hands and talked him through it, Yuna and David's expressions softened. Ilya looked between them both while he soothed Shane. They even seemed a little amused as he and Shane called each other boyfriends for the first time, because of course. Of course they'd come up with a whole plan to move cities and countries and start charities before they'd even settled on a label.

His heart skipped a few beats at the sound of it though. Shane Hollander was his *boyfriend*. And he'd just met his boyfriend's *parents*.

And Ilya knew, now with one hundred percent certainty, this was exactly where he wanted to be. This felt like home. Like family. He looked forward to a future with the Hollanders, more excited and optimistic than he'd ever felt about anything in his life.

Chapter End Notes

i might be a little nostalgic for 2000s-era goofy romcom hijinks and i'm taking you all along for the ride lmao

Edit: [THERE IS ART!!!](#) Go look at it, it's amazing! Thank you Olivia!!! 💖🥰

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Ilya and Shane watch the Stanley Cup finals, plus a little "epilogue" scene to bring this saga to an end. 🍷

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

June

“I hate Hunter.”

“No, you don’t,” Shane said. He passed Ilya the bowl of popcorn across the couch where they’d both sprawled out.

“I do,” Ilya insisted, taking a huge handful. “So he finally gets his win after fifty long years in the league. Big deal. Took him long enough.”

Shane scoffed. “I think you just have a crush on him.” He poked Ilya’s thigh with his foot.

“Oh? Are you jealous?”

“So jealous. With your raging fetish for good boys, I’m worried you’ll run away with the next guy you see with his shirt tucked in.”

“Mmph, nothing hotter,” Ilya said, dramatically rolling his eyes. “Except for a big collection of lame polo shirts. That really gets me hard.” Ilya threw a piece of popcorn at Shane, and got a delicious ‘clenched disapproval’ face in return.

Ilya sighed towards the television where excited, sweaty, emotional New York players were celebrating. “Ugh... fucking Hunter.”

“Aw. Leave him alone, he deserves it. He definitely kicked Montreal’s ass this season, that’s for sure.”

“Sounds like it’s *you* who has the crush, Hollander.”

Shane looked at Hunter on the screen thoughtfully, as if weighing his options. He wrinkled his nose adorably. “Hm. Nah. Not annoying enough.”

Ilya grinned and pinched Shane's thigh hard, making him squirm.

“*Fuck !* Ow. See? Exactly what I'm looking for in a man. Irritating as hell,” Shane said. He grinned back, then threw a popcorn kernel at Ilya’s face.

They watched more of the celebrations, cup-hoisting, and photo ops before Shane stood to go unload the dishwasher.

“Good idea. Is more interesting than watching this,” Ilya huffed, making Shane laugh as he walked away. He got his phone out to look at anything other than the smiling Admirals with their stupid happy tears.

The commentators caught Ilya’s attention as they noticed Hunter in the penalty box for some reason. What the hell was he doing? Calling after someone? The players’ families had already spilled out onto the ice, who else could he be looking at? Ilya sat forward with his elbows on his knees.

Shane came back, drying his hands on a dish towel. “What are they talking about?”

“Hunter being a fucking weirdo.”

They both looked on as some random guy climbed over the glass and basically fell onto Hunter right there in the penalty box.

Then, *holy shit*.

Holy shit???

Ilya’s jaw dropped. Scott fucking Hunter was *kissing a man* . Not only that, he was kissing *the hell* out of this random cute guy he pulled out of the crowd. Hunter pulled back and looked at him like he was the only person in the world. Then he fucking kissed him again. *With tongue*.

“*What the fuck?* ” Shane said, both hands holding his head, towel dropped to the floor. “Holy fucking *shit*, oh my god. What the fuck, is that his *boyfriend* ?”

They both could only stare in shock at the monumental moment unfolding in front of them. Suddenly Ilya was filled with *hope* as Hunter, one of the league’s biggest stars, came out as gay in an interview right there on the ice. Every concern he had about his relationship with Shane just got a hundred times lighter.

“Ilya...” Shane looked at him with watery eyes and a shaky smile.

Oh god, Shane . Ilya stood and went to him, crashing their bodies together and wrapping Shane into a huge, tight embrace. As Shane pressed his face into Ilya’s shoulder and took huge breaths, his hands gripped hard into Ilya’s back and shoulders, his arms squeezing the hell out of Ilya’s chest. Ilya knew this moment was even more important to Shane, their relationship aside.

“Oh my god, Ilya. He just...” Shane trailed off. He turned his head toward the TV again where Hunter was beaming, holding this mystery man’s hand and talking to some of his teammates.

“Yeah.” Ilya held the back of Shane’s neck and kissed the top of his head. As much as Ilya loved to give Hunter shit on the ice and get under his skin, he just made history for the entire league, for all of sports, really. And for that, Ilya was grateful, especially for the impact this would have on Shane.

“This is huge,” Shane whispered.

“Yes. Come here. Sit.”

Shane sat down hard on the couch and covered his face with his hands. Ilya dropped next to him, put his arm around his shoulders, and kissed him on the temple. Shane looked back up at the TV, his eyes wet and his hands folded together in front of his lips. They watched Hunter hug his boyfriend again. The commentators repeated “ *Scott Hunter just came out as gay to the whole world, right here after his first Stanley Cup win.*”

“I’m not the only one,” Shane eventually said, slowly and quietly. “It’s not just me. I... I can’t believe it. I can’t fucking believe it.”

“I can't either.”

“I'm sorry. I mean. You're bi, I know this is important for you too, I don't mean, like-”

“No, I know. I understand,” Ilya interrupted. “I know what you mean. Is... different. For you.”

Shane nodded. He wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his t-shirt, then smiled at Ilya. He held Ilya's face with both hands, looking so stunned and happy. “Things are gonna change.”

“They are.” Ilya smiled back at him.

“Everything... It's all gonna get better, right?”

“Yes. It will. It has to.”

Shane laughed and sniffled, then kissed him messily, full of relief and hope. Ilya gently pushed him back onto the couch, then wrapped his arms around him, holding him tightly. They kissed awkwardly with their smiles pressed together. Scott Hunter of all people just changed their lives in a way Hunter probably couldn't have guessed in a million years.

Shane's phone rang on the coffee table. Ilya reached over to grab it.

“Is your mom.”

Shane grinned and sat bolt upright, snatching the phone from Ilya.

As soon as Shane answered, Yuna's voice came through. “*Shane! Oh my god!*”

“I know!” Shane stood and paced as he spoke on the phone, animatedly talking to his parents about what they just witnessed.

Ilya sat up and watched Shane talk. Things had been going really well with Shane's parents since that first disastrous meeting with them. In between Shane's doctor's appointments, they'd taken a few trips to Ottawa to visit and spend a few nights with them to watch playoff games. Ilya loved getting to know Yuna and David better.

Shane stopped his circuit around the apartment and stood in a random spot in the room, listening to his parents with his eyes glued to the TV. He covered his mouth with his hand as his eyes became glassy all over again.

"I gotta text him, or something," he said, then he cleared his throat. "I dunno. I'll write him an email. I don't know what I'm gonna say, but I've got to. It's too important... I don't know what the league will do, or the commissioner... Yeah, I'm worried about that too... Okay. Yeah, I will... You too... Ilya, Mom says hi, she says she loves you too... Okay. Bye."

"Bye Yuna! Love you!" Ilya shouted across the room before Shane hung up. Yuna and David were so quick to welcome him into the family and show him the same love they had for Shane, he melted into a total puddle every time he was reminded of that.

Shane collapsed onto the couch and slouched low against Ilya's shoulder. Ilya took Shane's hand and kissed the back of it, then kissed Shane's hair.

"Scott Hunter just came out," Shane said, still dazed. "He won... the fucking *Stanely Cup* ... and came out. On live television."

"After he made out with his boyfriend on TV. In the penalty box," Ilya added, then chuckled a bit. The entire thing was absurd.

"*Oh my god*," Shane said as he cracked up. "This is actually insane."

"I take back almost everything I have said about Hunter being boring. Almost."

Ilya's twenty-sixth birthday was probably the best birthday he'd ever had, ever.

In previous years he'd either spent it at random bars with his teammates, getting excessively and stupidly shitfaced, or he'd spent it in Moscow, alone and miserable. This year, he had spent his birthday in Ottawa at Shane's parents' house.

They'd stayed there for three days in total and had a lovely birthday dinner on the back patio. David had fired up the grill and Yuna had baked a cake and bought ice cream. The four of them had shared a giant pitcher of homemade sangria, getting pleasantly wine-drunk and feeling warm and fuzzy, and it had been absolutely perfect.

Ilya had never been so surrounded by so much love.

Now they had just arrived back at Shane's in Montreal the day after, and Ilya had his boyfriend pressed into the mattress in the bedroom, making out like they were teenagers. They kissed and touched each other with no real rush to escalate anything. Ilya kissed his way across Shane's chest, half-exposed now with most of his shirt buttons undone, stopping

to nip at Shane's healed collar bone. Shane sighed and slipped his hands around Ilya's shoulders, holding tight as he melted into the bed.

"Shane," Ilya said into his neck.

"Mm?"

"*Moya lyubov'... moy dorogoi,*" Ilya purred.

"I assume those are nice things," Shane said with a little smile.

"My love, my dear," Ilya translated. He snaked his arm under Shane's neck and rolled them to their sides, pulling their bodies against each other and kissing his neck and face, anywhere he could reach. "My heart. My sweet. The love of my life. My best boyfriend ever," he continued, with kisses punctuating his terms of affection. "My favorite person. You know something? For my birthday wish. I want just one thing."

"Oh?" Shane sighed and tipped his head back for more kisses.

"Just one request."

"What's that?"

Ilya pulled back and looked him in the eyes, and said seriously, "Please. Let me see the dildo."

"You asshole!" Shane said as he laughed and pushed Ilya away by the shoulders. Ilya laughed with him, trying to wrestle Shane back into his arms.

"What? What did I do?"

"I knew it, I fucking *knew* you were about to say some bullshit."

"Is not bullshit!" Ilya insisted, grinning. He moved to straddle Shane and pinned him under his weight. Ilya attacked his neck and shoulder with messy kisses while Shane still tried to wiggle and escape. "I am so serious." He eventually caught Shane's wrists and held them down onto the bed on either side of his scrunched, annoyed face.

"Is not a joke," Ilya said softly, then kissed Shane's cheek. "I would really love to see it. I will not make fun. Promise." He kissed underneath Shane's ear, knowing where he was most sensitive. All the fight left Shane and he completely relaxed under Ilya's touch.

"I want to see it," he whispered, then ground his hips against Shane's. "Then I want to use it on you. Fuck you with it while I blow you," Ilya said in a low rumble.

"Oh *god...*" Shane exhaled, trailing off. His eyes closed as he blushed, his face totally slack while he was definitely putting his imagination to work. Ilya unbuttoned the rest of Shane's shirt and removed it, then stripped off his own t-shirt.

Ilya bent down and cradled Shane's chest between his hands, holding his rib cage, then pressed kisses to the center. "So? Will you?"

Shane sighed twice: first contentedly, after Ilya kissed up Shane's sternum, then exasperatedly as he scrubbed a hand over his face.

"Fine," he conceded.

Ilya's smile nearly split his face in two. "Really?"

Shane rolled his eyes. "Yeah. Alright, move," he said, then got off the bed and opened the lowest drawer in his nightstand. Ilya sat cross-legged on the edge of the bed, watching with great interest. Shane reached to the very back of the drawer, behind a massage gun and a neatly folded heating pad, and retrieved a black drawstring bag. He sat down and thrust it toward Ilya without making eye contact. Shane's face and ears already blushed a deep crimson.

Ilya held it reverently, cradling it across both of his palms, and couldn't stop grinning. He opened the bag, removed the silicone object, and paused.

"Can I say one thing?" Ilya asked.

"No."

"This is-

"*No*."

"-the most normal dildo ever."

"Shut up," Shane said, then lunged to take it back. Ilya held it out of reach. "Give it back if you're gonna be an asshole about it."

"Really! I just don't know what I expected."

"Well, *I* expected *you* to not give me shit. You promised."

"I'm not giving shit!"

"Aren't you?"

"No," Ilya said, looking at the completely average toy again. That didn't mean he wouldn't *think* about it though. This thing was like, the dictionary definition of dildo. Average length and shape, average light tan skin tone. "Is just so... Normal."

"That just means you're making fun of me for being boring," Shane grumbled.

"No, Shane, look," Ilya said. He set the toy down and reached for Shane's face with both hands. His dark eyes looked at Ilya suspiciously. "I love the boring. I have always loved it. I can't even explain how much I love that about you."

Shane was still scowling, and he tried to wiggle free a little, but Ilya persisted. “Seriously. I love that. I can’t explain why, and I know I make fun sometimes, but really. I love that part of you so much.”

Shane closed his eyes and sighed, then took Ilya's hands in his own. “Really?” he asked seriously, meeting Ilya's gaze.

“Really.” Ilya leaned into Shane and kissed his cheek, then his lips. The moment Shane pressed back into the kiss, Ilya hauled him down to the bed, rolling them until Ilya covered Shane's body again. He kissed Shane softly and took his hand, threading their fingers together next to Shane's head.

It was the truth. Not only was Shane’s “boringness” and normalcy so perfectly and adorably *him*, it comforted Ilya. He’d always felt secure with Shane, no matter where they were or how long they’d been seeing each other. Compared to the constant instability and chaos of Ilya’s life before, any time he’d spent with Shane brought him a sense of peace. He felt safe in a way he’d always longed for, but never thought would happen. *He’d been reeled in by this annoying Canadian, and all that he knew was that he wanted to stay. He wanted to anchor himself to Shane and just... stay.*

“So?” he whispered against Shane's lips. “What do you think? How about a threesome with your friend?”

Shane rolled his eyes and grinned back at him. “Shut up.”

Shane wrapped his legs around Ilya's hips and held tight, pulling their bodies together on the very bed Ilya had dreamed of sharing with Shane for ages.

And now that he was here, with his boyfriend he was madly in love with, Ilya wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world.

Chapter End Notes

THANK YOU to everyone that's been reading and following along! Thank you for all the comments and kudos and encouragement in the discord! This scenario was so much fun to imagine, and I'm crazy happy that others have enjoyed this "what if" idea too.

Special thanks to [@peacelillies](#) for the constant brainstorming sessions and chats and troubleshooting that kept this thing going. And to radlerz in the discord for fantastic beta reading!



Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!