

it's too close for comfort

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/73571001) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/73571001>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , OCs
Additional Tags:	POV Outsider , POV Shane Hollander , Anti-doping , Panic Attacks , Anxiety , Comfort/Angst , Angst , Boys In Love , Blood tests (non-explicit) , Social Media , Implied/Referenced Homophobia , Secret Relationship , Accidentally Outed
Language:	English
Collections:	HollaNov fanfics I Love , my fav gay hockey players , fanfics that i keep coming back to read , Meldiriel didn't know whether to laugh or to cry , Fics that drag me back into obsessions , The best pairings to bask in , THE COTTAGE , i have only been in love with one person , Hollanov 🍷 , Heated Rivalry , hollanov for the heart <3 , Relationship Reveal HR , so obsessed i might actually watch hockey , HR , Prongs_Antlerz favourite hockey yaoi
Stats:	Published: 2025-11-02 Words: 7,779 Chapters: 1/1

it's too close for comfort

by [theoneiam2277](#)

Summary

The doorbell rings just as Shane is finishing brushing his teeth – the first thing they rose to do, because he wants to kiss Ilya good morning – and he and Ilya exchange a confused look in the bathroom mirror. It's barely dawn, and Ilya's curls are adorably tousled from sleep as he scratches his ribs lazily, toothbrush dangling from the corner of his mouth.

Shane hesitates, then rinses his toothpaste out and runs a hand through his hair. "Fuck, it's probably anti-doping."

No one else would be here at this hour – unless it's an emergency.

Notes

So, my first foray into Hollanov! Mostly set in very late autumn 2018, after they announced the Irina Foundation, so December ish? cursory research was done as to anti-doping protocols in the NHL but don't come at me if I've fucked up the facts xD

Title from Rihanna - *Disturbia*.

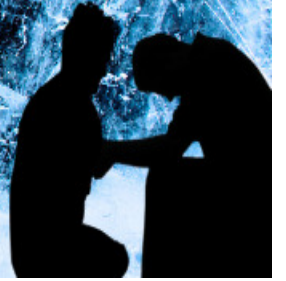
Thank you to [Ellebelle](#) for being the best beta, and to both you and [Steen](#) for enticing me into this fandom, I'm enjoying myself immensely! <3

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

theoneiam2277

IT'S TOO CLOSE FOR *comfort*

SHANE X ILYA



it's too close for comfort

The doorbell rings just as Shane is finishing brushing his teeth – the first thing they rose to do, because he wants to kiss Ilya good morning – and he and Ilya exchange a confused look in the bathroom mirror. It's barely dawn, and Ilya's curls are adorably tousled from sleep as he scratches his ribs lazily, toothbrush dangling from the corner of his mouth.

Shane hesitates, then rinses his toothpaste out and runs a hand through his hair. "Fuck, it's probably anti-doping."

No one else would be here at this hour – unless it's an emergency.

"Well, go answer it." Ilya spits out toothpaste as well and turns, leaning back against the counter like he doesn't have a care in the world. "I'll stay out of sight. Move to the workout room and hide there, if I need to."

Neither of them are willing to consider the worst case scenario, though it's a fifty-fifty chance, but Shane sees the subtle tension in Ilya's frame, feels his own anxiety rising.

Shane picks up a pair of sweats from the bedroom on the way to his front door, and takes a deep breath before he peeks out the keyhole. Outside Shane's condo door are two professionally-dressed men, and his sleepy brain is catching up rapidly now, heartbeat increasing even though he knows he's done absolutely nothing wrong.

It's always like this.

Even if he'd never touch something illegal, the tests make Shane anxious.

Most athletes have to report guaranteed time slots when they'll be at a certain place in case they are picked for random anti-doping testing, and they obviously have to keep the organization updated about their whereabouts. It's been a while since Shane got tested at home – often it's been at some event or the randomized whole-team testing at training camps or such – and he thinks the last time was at his cottage. He's meticulous about updating his whereabouts, they all have to be, and he and Ilya have discussed it several times. It wasn't a problem when it was just a quick fuck after Boston or Montreal home games, but now that they actually are in a relationship, they've just had to take the risk and file their whereabouts as being at each other's places regularly. Luckily, the team management doesn't have access to those records they file themselves, and the doping organization has laws about privacy, but...

Surely, they're here for Shane, though? Surely, they aren't about to be outed to some random DCO's when they've kept their *thing* secret for years?

He opens the door.

The poor men look awkward as hell at the sight of him, while they're usually smooth and professional. It doesn't bode well.

"Good morning, Mr. Hollander. I am here for Mr. Ilya Rozanov?" The Doping Control Officer on the right holds up his clipboard of paperwork and his identification warily. The other man on the left side, probably a chaperone, offers a strained smile.

They clearly recognize Shane, know that this is his residence.

And that Ilya is supposed to be *here*.

Shit, shit, shit.

The words and excuses tangle in Shane's mouth, invading his airway and yet not forming into actual speech. What is there to say, anyway? Ilya's evidently slept over, since he's filed he'll be here for the night, and while they're publicly *friends* now, it's—

Maybe it can still be saved?

"Well, uh, this is awkward."

Ilya's voice is all too cheerful and not regretful enough for the situation. He's clearly been listening in, and saunters into the hallway behind Shane, bare feet padding across the floor. Shane refuses to turn to look, knows exactly what this looks like now. Ilya has a fucking lovebite on his chest and his hip *and* his thigh that Shane left there last night, and they're guaranteed to see them all during the testing process. It doesn't help that Ilya is fucking coming out of the main bedroom like he belongs in there.

Shane feels like the tomato Ilya regularly jokes that he is, his ears burning as he steps aside to admit the anti-doping officers who just knocked on his door at 6.00 in the morning.

Internally, he's freaking out. They're there for *Ilya*, in Shane's apartment. They *know*.

Outwardly, he can at least try to act normal.

"Shut up, Rozanov," Shane grumbles, "Please excuse him, come on in."

The poor DCO and chaperone look like they'd much rather be somewhere else — *anywhere* else. Their eyes are wide as saucers, swinging between Shane and Ilya — both dressed in just sweatpants. It's a day off for Ilya — the only reason he's in Montreal, a two day window of opportunity — but Shane has practice to head to later. Otherwise they wouldn't even be up yet.

"Mr. Rozanov, good morning."

"Fine day, is it not?" Ilya responds, a smirk pulling at his mouth. He's fucking *enjoying* having the officers on the backfoot, the menace, stretching his hands above his head casually. "Fine day for watching me pee in a cup."

Shane groans, covering his eyes with a hand and stumbling past them into the living room. Embarrassment burns up his spine, mingling with terror, because what if the officers talk? He knows they're not allowed to, but rumors start so easily, and then it's easy enough to look into Ilya and Shane's movement and see the pattern.

See the relationship they've worked hard to keep private.

"I would tell you to feel at home but," Ilya shrugs. "Is not my home."

The one who seems to be more in a chaperoning role clears his throat awkwardly as Ilya tails Shane into the open concept space. Inevitably, both the doping officers follow. Shane doesn't like strangers in his space, strangers encroaching on his private life, and definitely not on something as precious to him as his relationship with Ilya is. Still, this is a necessary evil, a normal part of being a top athlete.

Sinking down into the couch cushions, he just wants Ilya to stop talking, wants to go back to sleep and pretend this never happened. Obviously, that won't happen, and Ilya joins him, keeping an appropriate distance.

As if it'll fool the officers into thinking this is just two friends having a sleepover.

Shane listens as they introduce themselves politely, go through the usual spiel of rights and processes. They all know how this goes, they've done it before, and Ilya looks totally unbothered as he lounges next to Shane, long, powerful limbs akimbo and spread out like he owns the space. It's distracting, Ilya always is, but not enough to quiet the panic.

What are the two strangers in his living room thinking? Are they looking at him and Ilya now, reading into every single move they make, scrutinizing the condo for proof of their entanglement? Are they *judging* them?

Dazedly, he listens as Ilya tosses out borderline rude jokes like he's never done anything else, keeping it just civil enough to toe the line. Usually, these situations are dealt with as efficiently as possible, and Shane doesn't like drawing them out, but his boyfriend is a different breed, it seems.

Even calling Ilya his *boyfriend* in his own head makes terror spark along his spine, as if anyone around him could read his thoughts, or perhaps read the word off his face.

"So, which one of you distinguished gentlemen will be accompanying me to the bathroom?"

To their credit, the DCO – who introduced himself as Tom Jackson – doesn't look thrown by Ilya's chirping, and the other man accompanying him – was it Jared Brown? Shane is too *stressed* to remember – turns his head away and rolls his eyes lightly, thinking Shane isn't looking. There's quite a few men who would be offended by any kind of *insinuation*, especially when they must now strongly suspect that Ilya and Shane are involved and therefore into men. Thankfully, there's no such adverse reaction. Instead, the DCO answers calmly that Ilya may request one of them, but that he's the primary one for that duty today.

Shane has to agree with Ilya's earlier comment. This is *fucking* awkward.

And scary as hell.

Embarrassingly, Shane's chest is starting to feel tight. The room swims before his eyes, and he rubs at his sternum as Ilya signs the paperwork provided, wishing desperately he could just disappear, but it makes no difference. They've already seen.

"Hollander?" Ilya's voice sounds like it's far away, and Shane realizes black spots are dancing in front of his eyes. "Hollander! Hey, Shane. *Shane*."

There's a familiar pair of hands digging into his thighs, just above his knees. Ilya's face swims into focus in front of him, his large body elegantly folded onto his knees before Shane.

"Breathe," Ilya murmurs. Those beautiful eyes of his are slightly narrowed, no cocky smirk to be seen even though he interjects teasing into his next sentence. "You can not go die on me before I get to beat you one more season in Boston's jersey. Take a fucking *breath*, Hollander."

Shane hadn't realized he'd stopped doing that.

His chest stutters, the air stinging his lungs, his ribs feeling incredibly constrained. The beginnings of a panic attack, his rational mind tells him, but the bigger part of him feels like he's dying. Shit, what if this is it? What if they get outed, what if they get kicked out of the league? Will their careers be over? Will Ilya be *safe*, will he be able to stay in America or Canada? Will—

"Another," Ilya says, stern and demanding.

Shane struggles, but manages some kind of wheeze. It's clearly not good enough for Ilya, who looks slightly worried and very tense, brows furrowing. Shane is never *good enough*, always striving for it but falling short, and now he's messing it all up by having a fucking panic attack in front of strangers and making Ilya worried when they should be playing it casual and cool like they're friends—

Ilya grabs Shane's hand, pulls it away from its death grip in the cushions, placing it over his heart. Shane's fingers overlap the bear tattoo partially and he stares at his own hand like it isn't his at all. There's a strange disconnect between his body and mind, but he does feel that Ilya's bare skin is warm. Feels his heartbeat and the movement of his body as he breathes deeply, the sculpted planes of his chest familiar and comforting.

"Breathe with me," Ilya encourages, softer now, but still firm. The voice he uses when he expects Shane to obey, the voice that guides him to his knees for Ilya or corrals him into settling down when he's been cleaning obsessively. Instinctively, he wants to please Ilya and listen to him, because Ilya is *important* to him.

And there is nothing driving him but instinct right now.

Shane tries to take a deep breath.

Ilya nods, ducking his head closer to Shane's face until it's all he can see: those beloved features and mesmerizing eyes. "Good," he murmurs softly, and Shane relaxes just a little at the praise, follows the rising chest under his palm and tries to take in another lungful. He succeeds somewhat. "Bet you can't match my breathing within five minutes."

Ilya's tone is warm and soft, but his eyes invite Shane into a challenge. Shane blinks away water in his eyes — he is *not* crying! — and manages to twitch his lips into some kind of smile. Oh, Ilya, always knowing what Shane needs. Fuck, he loves this man so much it's hard to comprehend at times.

Shane's voice is thready and weak. "Bet," he manages, and Ilya huffs in amusement.

"There you go," he encourages. "I'm timing you." Indeed, he glances at his wristwatch, the fiend, noting the time, but doesn't move his hands from where they are touching Shane — one still by his knee, the other holding Shane's palm to Ilya's chest. "In, and out."

Ilya exaggerates the breaths, and they slowly become easier to follow. Shane's head starts feeling increasingly clear, his fingertips tingling weirdly as he becomes aware of their audience.

He'd totally forgotten, in his panic.

The anti-doping officers are politely looking elsewhere, sitting stiffly and pretending to be absorbed by the paperwork.

Shane groans quietly, mortification settling in, his breathing going more shallow again.

"*Nyet*," Ilya denies, the syllable familiar after all these years of listening to Ilya slip into Russian for *yes* and *no*, and Shane's head is forcibly turned back to his boyfriend when Ilya grabs his chin. "Look at me. You are fine. They will not talk of this."

Logically, Shane knows that.

His heartbeat is still racing though, cold sweat now drying on his back. It's incredibly uncomfortable, and he swallows dryly.

"Yeah," he whispers. He's never had a panic attack in front of people other than his mom. Even when at times he's been close – like when they first talked to Shane's parents after they were discovered – it's never been this bad around others. Shane feels vulnerable and shaky.

Ilya cups his cheek briefly, the movement covered by his body as he rises. The rough pad of his thumb passes over Shane's cheekbone gently and strokes into his hair before Ilya grasps his shoulder, pulling him gently to his feet. Shane thanks whatever deity exists that Ilya is taller than him, so he doesn't have to look over his shoulder and see the two men behind Ilya's back.

Instead, Ilya telegraphs his movements clearly, showing Shane he's going in for a hug in case that's too much right now, and Shane just stands there and accepts it.

It feels good to be in Ilya's arms, nose buried in his clavicle, breathing in the scent of Ilya's skin. Safe. Comforting.

The pressure of his arms is grounding Shane, and he sighs in relief, though his legs still tremble as he wraps his arms around Ilya's waist. It's too familiar, too revealing – an embrace, not a quick hug – but that ship has already sailed, he supposes.

"Sweetheart," Ilya murmurs into his ear, just a breath, just for them. "Better?" Shane nods against Ilya's chest, relaxes into his grip. "You are alright."

Is he reassuring Shane or himself? Shane can't tell.

I love you, he mouths into Ilya's skin, dazed and somehow scared out of his mind, yet soft for the man holding him so carefully. It feels illegal to even think those words when they're not alone.

"Let me get you a glass of water, Hollander," Ilya says, louder. "Sit back down, you look pale."

Shane pulls back and makes a face at Ilya for that comment. "Fuck you, Rozanov." It makes a small smile bloom on his boyfriend's lips.

"Don't give me that," Ilya says, pretending to be offended. At least he's not taking the very obvious path of saying: *Not now, Hollander, you needy thing, we've got company. But I can fuck you later, if*

you want. Though the twinkle in his eyes makes it clear he knows about the missed opportunity to say something completely inappropriate that would embarrass Shane. “Breathing is essential to life and life is essential to playing hockey. I can not find enjoyment in triumphing over your corpse next month.”

Shane rolls his eyes, but sits down. It’s a cold reminder that after this, their schedules conflict for a few weeks. He’s suddenly *angry* that their peaceful time together was interrupted, that fucking anti-doping protocol has stolen a quiet, lovely morning when he could have had Ilya in his arms, all to himself. The fizz of anger chases the panic out of his bloodstream, which is good, but he still feels shaky.

The DCO rises and accompanies Ilya to the kitchen to see what he is doing – standard procedure, the athlete not going anywhere alone once the intention to test has been made clear – but Shane buries his head in his hands.

Maybe if he closes his eyes, this day will just be over and he can go bury himself in bed and pretend it never happened?

Ilya comes back with a glass of water. Ice cubes clink against the rim, and Shane has to untangle his fingers from his own hair, realizing he was pulling on the strands sharply to counteract his rising anxiety. Several dark strands have come loose and flutter from his fingers to the floor.

“Drink it fast,” Ilya advises, and Shane knows what he means. A cold shock sometimes helps regulate the nervous system when it’s in upheaval.

Gulping it down feels like a slap to the face, but it does help a little.

“Good?” Ilya crouches down before him, and Shane wishes he wouldn’t. It makes him feel like a child, like something that has to be taken care of – but then again, isn’t he? And Ilya’s not being patronizing or overbearing, just caring and sweet.

Accepting it, Shane swallows his pride and nods. “Thanks, Ilya.”

His boyfriend nods, a silent acknowledgement, and rises. “Let us get this over with,” he tells the DCO, and then glances back down to Shane. *Will you be okay?* is painted very clearly on his features, but Shane appreciates that he doesn’t ask it out loud.

Ilya must read the answer off his features. Shane squares his shoulders and gathers himself. His head still feels weird, his body sluggish, but he’ll be alright. All he wants is these people out of the apartment so he can curl up and maybe cry.

There’s a short, quiet conversation while the officers and Ilya open the testing materials, do the precursory checks, and then the DCO follows Ilya to the bathroom. Shane has reburied his head in his hands and lets the words flow over him. The chaperone stays in the room, fiddling with the large bag that contains equipment for a blood test. Shane could get up, could leave the room, but that feels impolite. He fights against his instincts.

All he wants is to get out of this situation.

Jared Brown never expected to find out on a random Tuesday morning that NHL stars Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov are *this* close.

He's seen his fair share of weird shit doing this job. It means being around a lot of top athletes in often awkward settings. Finding out about relationships or one-night-stands isn't unusual. They have strict privacy regulations, of course, and he's signed a ton of agreements and contracts regarding that – something they often have to remind athletes of.

That's what he should do, right now.

But Jared watches Shane Hollander sit stiffly on the couch – back bowed, hiding his face, breathing still shallow – and weighs the pros and cons.

He's witnessed panic attacks before. His best friend struggles with anxiety, and Jared's helped him through a few, just like Rozanov just did for Hollander. Opening his mouth right now could be really stupid, and at worst make Hollander panic again.

He can't stay quiet, though.

"We won't breathe a word of this," Jared says quietly, trying to make his voice as kind as possible. Hollander looks up, like a deer in the headlights, eyes wide. He looks very fragile for a bulky, well-trained man. "We wouldn't either way, because we've got strict contracts, but I promise, this won't get out through us. Not the—" he waves a hand nervously towards Shane, "—the panic attack, not the—"

Another handwavey gesture towards where Rozanov and Jared's colleague Tom just disappeared.

"You can say it," Hollander sighs. He looks defeated and small, shoulders slumping.

"...the relationship between you and Rozanov." Jared finished his sentence gently. Because it's pretty damn clear that is what it is. They're both half-naked, Rozanov came out of the master bedroom earlier and he moves around comfortably in Hollander's kitchen. Knows where the glasses are. Not to mention the hickeys on Rozanov's torso, or the way the two hockey players interact, or their familiar touches while Rozanov was calming Hollander down. "I'm sorry this happened. No one should be outed against their will."

Jared's sister Ivy has beaten that fact into his head, which is why he doesn't mention now that he's got a sister who dates girls, even if it might calm Hollander, because Ivy's not completely out yet and he respects her privacy.

Instead, he says: "I know someone who is a lesbian, and she says that hiding is very tough and scary, so believe me, I won't fuck this up for you guys. And Tom's a nice guy, he doesn't mind and he won't blab."

Indeed, Tom Jackson is one of Jared's favourite fellow DCO's to work with, and a good friend to boot.

Hollander still looks like he doesn't believe Jared. Or maybe he's just suffering after-effects from the panic attack. Either way, Jared *wants* him to understand.

“We see this all the time, Mr. Hollander,” he assures the man, and sees Hollander grimace slightly. “Secret relationships, things people don’t show outside their home. It’s fine.”

Hollander groans lowly, almost a pained sound. His cheeks are red. “I apologize, I’m being so unprofessional right now.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Jared hurries to reassure him, daring a small smile. Hollander gives him a very shaky one in response, rubbing at the bridge of his nose. At least he’s breathing normally again. “It’s always an uncomfortable situation to begin with, the testing, so we completely understand.”

It had been a bit scary, in fact, to see Hollander’s breathing grow uneven, to see him swaying on the couch. Rozanov was the first to notice – since they were all caught up in procedure – calling out Hollander’s name. Jared could sense the moment where Rozanov went *fuck it*, glancing back at Jared and Tom for a second, brows furrowed, before abandoning his unbothered public persona and kneeling before Hollander.

Jared tried not to watch, because it felt almost too intimate, like peeping on something not for him. It was obvious in their ease with each other that this was much more than friendship or a casual hookup, that Rozanov was talking his *partner* through a bad bout of anxiety. The way they touched without thinking, unbothered by being half-naked, the gentle teasing and how Rozanov knew exactly how far to push. The challenge, the bet with no stakes. And while his eyes were averted, he knows friends do not look at each other with the kind of soft, lovesick and concerned look Rozanov gave Hollander while the man gulped down ice water.

Jared’s thoughts spin as Hollander clearly tries to gather himself, running hands through his hair.

While he obviously won’t say a fucking word, he and Tom are going to dissect the shit out of this in the car later. In a respectful, professional way, of course.

Who is he kidding, they *gossip* like teenage girls.

Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander? That is *big* news. They’ve barely interacted in public during their careers (and okay, Jared is a die-hard hockey fan, sue him) except for their publicized on-ice rivalry. A few campaigns, sure, and that famous All Star game with them on the same line-up... When they announced their friendship and their joint foundation, Jared was stunned.

Most people were, and there’s definitely been whispers about it being a PR trick, that Hollander and Rozanov were told by their teams to bury the hatchet publically, that the rivalry was getting out of hand.

Now Jared suspects the opposite, that it was a move to cover up how close they actually are.

It’s none of his business, but he’s a curious person. Instead, he gropes around in his brain for a safe topic to talk to a half-dressed, anxious hockey player about at 6:25 in the morning.

“I really admire the foundation you guys have set up,” Jared starts. There, a neutral, typical thing to say. “The focus areas are so important and it will have such a huge impact.”

Hollander perks up slightly, some of the awkwardness in the air easing. “I hope so. It’s still a work in progress, of course, but doing something actually *good* with all this fame and media circus felt relevant.”

Then he blushes and shuts up, like he thinks he's said too much, though it's such a scripted camera-ready answer it must have been drilled into him. Jared smiles encouragingly.

"You both have a large platform of fans. Lots of reach."

Hollander pulls a slight face. He's clearly absolutely terrible at covering up his emotions, and Jared wonders how the fuck he's kept whatever is going on with Rozanov secret with so many cameras aimed at them.

"Yeah," Hollander shrugs. "I'm no good at the whole social media thing, though."

Jared can't relate, because he's addicted to that shit, but he nods politely. "That's why PR people exist?"

Luckily, Hollander huffs a tiny laugh at his offer of an option instead of being offended. "Yeah, we're definitely leaving that to the experts. Though Ilya— Rozanov is a lot better than I am."

Jared chooses to ignore the slip, even though it's almost cute how Hollander struggles with keeping to calling Rozanov by his last name.

"Either way, I wish the NHL used its platforms more for that kind of charity work. Not that there isn't any, but it's never *enough*, you know?"

Hollander's face has darkened. "I know what you mean. It's frustrating, at times. How restrictive hockey is when it comes to these things."

Jared swallows, because he didn't mean to bring up that kind of bad vibes. The NHL is pretending to be modern and accepting on many fronts, but hanging around on hockey social media spaces means he's very aware of the rampant homophobia, racism and general atmosphere of intolerance towards anyone who is different.

Luckily, Rozanov enters the room just then, tossing a balled-up hoodie at Hollander. It hits him on the side of the head, and Jared tries his best to hide an amused smile. These two act like toddlers, and it's nice to see that what seemed like serious enmity on the ice is actually playful.

"Hey! What was that for?" Hollander grumbles, but pulls on the hoodie.

"You looked too serious," Rozanov quips, Tom at his heels. Jared's colleague meets his gaze, eyes widening in a *Are you seeing what I'm seeing?* as Rozanov saunters over to Hollander and pulls on his hoodie strings teasingly. "Lighten up, Hollander."

It could be a very rude thing to say to someone who just had a panic attack, but Hollander only gives Rozanov an unimpressed stare as the man smirks down at him.

"Fine, be that way," Rozanov relents, his Russian accent bleeding over into the words, before he continues with a short sentence in Russian that makes Hollander flush and duck his head. Goal clearly achieved, Rozanov moves to an armchair and pulls up the sleeve of a hoodie he donned at some point. "I am ready to lose some blood."

It's blunt and effective, jolting Tom and Jared into action.

They tag-team the prepwork, but Jared leaves the actual drawing of blood to Tom. Rozanov seems to have easily visible veins, and makes a joke about it. Of course he does.

Hollander is shaking his head, but it's both fond and exasperated.

Jared is pleased to see some of the tension has drained from Hollander's body, now that Rozanov is around. The man still looks drawn and stressed though, and Jared feels stupidly guilty for doing his job in a way he's not used to. It feels so wrong to know what he does, when it's clear that Hollander and Rozanov – under that facade of a *devil-may-care* attitude – did not want anyone to know about them. If only there was a way to scrub his brain of this knowledge, but that's too futuristic and would be abused if someone ever comes up with a technique, so Jared shudders at the thought and passes Tom some gauze as he finishes up with Rozanov.

There's a meticulous process of labeling things and securing them into appropriate storage for transport, which Rozanov has the right to oversee. He does, dutifully, moving to sit next to Hollander and finishing up the final paperwork. Hollander is clearly dipping, tired and worn. Jared tries to be as quick as possible to get them out of there, because the hangovers after panic attacks can be just as bad as the panic attacks themselves, and the man clearly needs a nap.

Tom's hand hesitates for just a second over the paperwork, and Jared looks up to see what the fuss is.

Rozanov has draped his arm around Hollander's shoulders, pulling him firmly into his side.

"*Rozanov*," Hollander hisses quietly, but the man doesn't let go.

"What does it matter?" Rozanov shrugs. "They have seen."

"You don't need to confirm it." But the grumble comes out weakly against the fabric of Rozanov's hoodie, as Hollander slumps into his partner. Jared wonders idly if this is more PDA than they've ever displayed before, and closes the transport bag.

"As I am sure my colleague has already assured you, Mr. Hollander, anything we see or hear during these visits is confidential information that we would never divulge to a third party unless it was required by law."

Tom recites their usual spiel, but he looks serious and calm, and has a way about him that makes you feel like he's speaking the truth. Hopefully it'll be soothing.

"We are aware," Rozanov answers, tone slightly terse. Worried, perhaps, or scared? "But we also know the kind of news this would be. I will be remembering your names."

So Rozanov knows who to blame if it gets out in the next few days, Jared knows.

"We hold ourselves to high standards," Tom responds, neutral and non-combative. "Privacy is one of them. Nobody shall hear about this from us, Mr. Rozanov."

Hollander tugs on Rozanov's hoodie sleeve, and immediately the Russian's attention turns to him. It looks instinctive and natural, the way Hollander frowns slightly and Rozanov lifts his eyebrows in response, a quiet language of expression between just the two of them. Jared marvels at the intimacy of it, of knowing a partner that well, and thinks warmly of his own girlfriend. In a few years, perhaps they'll read each other as well as these two NHL stars seem to do.

Finally, Hollander shakes his head minutely. "Leave it, Ilya," he sighs. "It's out of our hands."

And *in* Jared's and Tom's, he means.

Rozanov nods, mouth tight, and surprisingly, leans in to kiss Hollander's temple. The man flushes a brilliant red again, but doesn't flinch or lean away. Then Rozanov turns his head on the two of them, a sharp glare. His expression is a clear warning, daring them to step out of line. He's as fierce as the namesake of the team he plays for – or for that matter, as fierce as the bear he's famously got tattooed on his chest, the one Jared saw earlier, with a bruising hickey next to it.

Jared never wants to be on the receiving end of that again. He's seen Rozanov get into fistfights on the ice protecting teammates or himself – how much more fiercely would he protect Hollander?

In fact, how the fuck do those two go up against *each other* on the ice and hurt each other?

They finish up quickly, and Hollander escorts them to the door. Rozanov goes to grab something from the kitchen – maybe a drink or something sugary, what with the tests.

Tom ties his shoes with efficiency, but Jared lingers closer to Hollander for just a moment.

“For what it's worth, you guys seem like a sweet couple.” It's a totally unprofessional thing to say, but Jared can't help it. Hollander startles at the quiet murmur, but looks more shy and surprised than offended, so Jared gathers up his bravery. “I wish you the best.”

“Oh.” Hollander is blushing again, blinking rapidly. “...thank you?”

It's so unsure it's almost a question, and then Jared bends to put on his shoes, grabbing the bag.

The last thing he sees before the door closes is Ilya Rozanov's fierce stare. Rozanov lifts his hand to his mouth, mimes zipping his lips shut, and Jared nods. Tom is already halfway to the elevator.

The door to the condo closes with a click, and Jared follows Tom to the car. The second they sit down, Tom turns to Jared.

“What the *fuck*?”

The gossip session begins.

The door closes, and Shane sags against the wall.

His head is spinning, his body heavy and lethargic, still trying to catch up with what has happened this morning.

In a few quick strides Ilya is in front of him, long legs eating up the distance so he can grab Shane by the hips and crowd close.

“That was unfortunate,” Ilya states, and Shane snorts inelegantly, because what an *understatement*. “Are you alright, lyubimyy?”

As always, the way Ilya calls Shane his love makes Shane melt into Ilya's body, drawing strength from his solid presence. Ilya is so unflappable, has been so calm and strong all morning while Shane has been panicking.

"I'm sorry—" he starts, but barely gets the words out before he's silenced by a soft kiss.

Ilya stays close, lips hovering over Shane's, as if to shut him up again if it's needed. "Not what I asked." There's a soft nudge of Ilya's nose against his own, the type of loving gesture Shane still can't believe he gets to have. "How are you feeling? Was overwhelming. And you were scared."

It's not a question, which Shane is thankful for, because admitting to the fear response he had would be too much right now.

He goes with the truth, because Ilya deserves it.

"Tired. Anxious." Shane tilts his head down to nuzzle into Ilya's neck. "I thought I— well, I wasn't expecting to react like that."

It doesn't bode well for any eventual reveal of their relationship, however big or small. Even if it's far in the future, maybe Shane needs to start preparing mentally. There's always a risk of being found out.

"No," Ilya says carefully, like he's weighing his words. "But understandable reaction. We were not prepared and it could have gone badly."

It didn't, at least not yet, because the DCO's were nice enough and they might keep their mouths shut.

"Are you?" Shane asks. "Scared, I mean?"

Ilya cups the back of his head, nose buried in Shane's hair. His breath tickles, and since all of Shane feels oversensitive it's actually unpleasant, but well worth withstanding for the comfort of being close to Ilya.

Shane has much to lose, yes: a career, friendships, sponsorships, a sport his whole life revolves around. But Ilya...

"Is like asking a tomato if it is red or you if you love hockey." Ilya's voice is flat, but Shane thinks it's just to cover up how vulnerable he feels. "Of course I am afraid of being outed and not being able to stay here. I can't go back to Russia then, if..."

The stakes are just so much higher for Ilya, and Shane clutches him tighter. The thought of this beautiful, loving man who throws around jokes and smirks being *hurt* for who he is... Ilya could be jailed, or at worst even quietly killed to get rid of him.

Silently, they contemplate the worst case scenarios, and Shane trembles, unable to imagine it. He feels shaky and off-center, like Ilya is the only thing holding him up, but that's not fair. They both had equally much of a scare, and here Ilya is, being unbearably sweet, helping Shane through a panic attack and being his rock.

"Thank you," Shane breathes. "For being so calm. It calmed me."

“I feel best when I am being helpful,” Ilya assures him, and Shane knows that, technically. Ilya loves caring for him and giving him what he needs. “Are you still anxious?”

“Yes, but more exhausted, I think.” Ilya pulls back, studying Shane’s face. “I’ve not had a proper panic attack in years.”

“I did not know you got them.” It’s a quiet, gentle admonishment, and Shane averts his eyes. “We will need to discuss what helps you when you do.”

“You knew exactly what I needed,” Shane murmurs. “I just– hadn’t gotten around to telling you yet.”

Ilya accepts that easily, lets it go. “Breathing together, physical touch, ice water?”

“Cold things in general tend to shock me out of it a bit. And you were on my level, not looming above me, which would have made it worse.” Hesitating, he glances at Ilya, because while it’s easy to say *I love you*, this feels infinitely more vulnerable. “Your *voice*– uhm, it helped. It’s safe. Firm commands to get my attention, and then a challenge– how did you guess?”

Ilya shrugs, and Shane feels the movement in his own body. “You respond well to challenges. And praise, though I could not exactly call you a *good boy* right then, could I?”

Shane groans, and closes his eyes.

“Do not be ashamed, Hollander,” Ilya croons. “I like that you are eager to please.”

The genuine tone of his voice eases some of Shane’s embarrassment.

“We should go rest.”

“We were supposed to eat breakfast an hour ago!” Shane protests, even though going back to bed is all he wants right now. “I’ve got practice in– *shit*, an hour!”

Ilya grabs Shane’s left arm that he raised to look at his wristwatch. “You are in no state to go to practice, Hollander.”

“Yes, I am,” Shane argues, though his legs feel like noodles. “I’m fine!”

“You are not,” Ilya says firmly. “You just had a panic attack and you look exhausted.”

“That’s what every man wants to hear his boyfriend say, that he looks *exhausted*,” Shane grumbles, but when Ilya steers him towards the bedroom, he goes.

Face-planting into the sheets, Ilya joining him, Shane draws in a deep breath, and then another. His body feels like it’s made of lead, and the anxiety lingers. He rubs his sternum absentmindedly, and yawns.

“Text your team.” Ilya hands over his phone from the nightstand and Shane props himself onto his elbows. “Tell them you are, what is it– feeling out in the weather?”

“Under the weather,” Shane corrects absentmindedly, and finds himself doing just that. Shocked, he stares at the message he just sent out to the team chat, and then frowns as the *get better*-messages flow in.

“Look at that.” Ilya sounds way too satisfied as he peers over Shane’s shoulder, and Shane locks the phone screen. “They care about you.”

“They would not if they knew why I was skipping practice.”

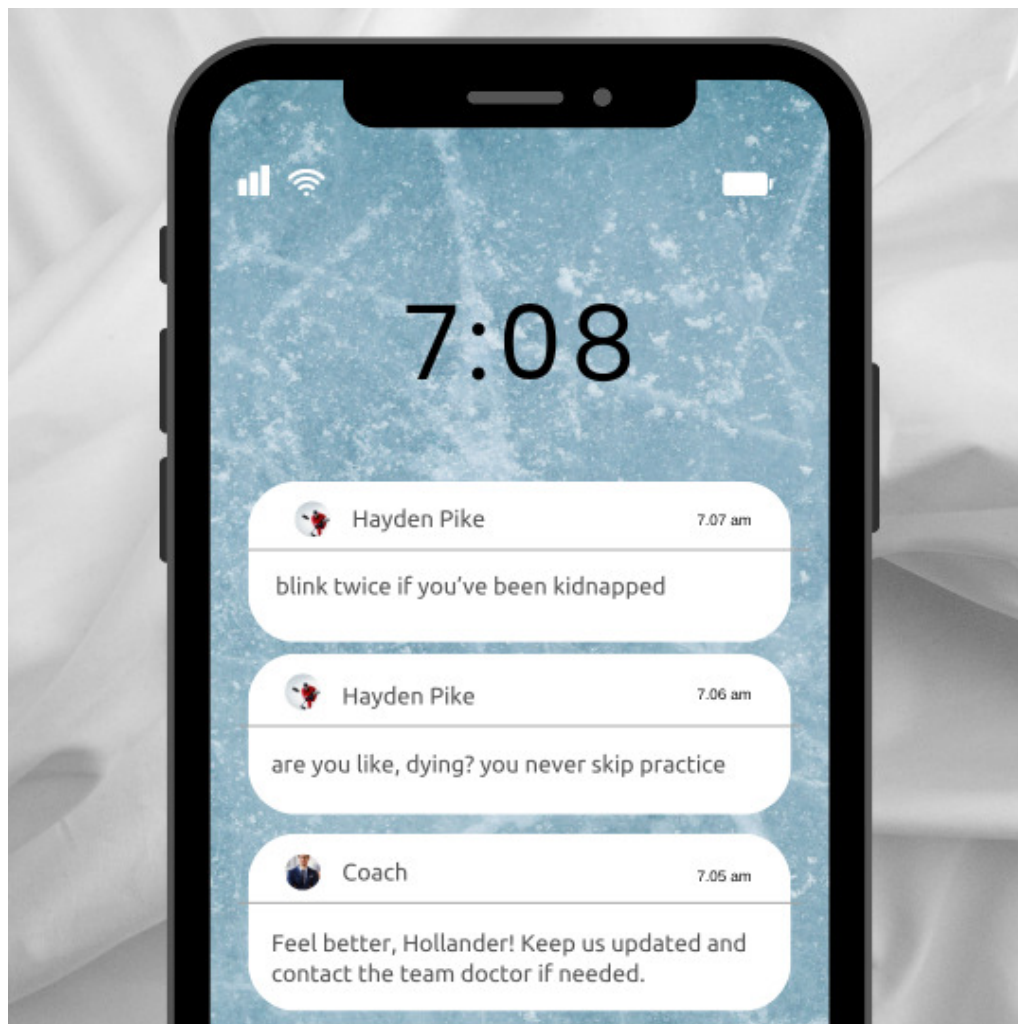
Shane knows he sounds sullen, and Ilya strokes over his back.

“You are too hard on yourself, lyubimyy.” The mattress dips as Ilya shifts his weight, moving to get up. “Just rest for a bit while I make breakfast.”

The offer is so sweet, Shane can hardly refuse it, especially when Ilya bends down to press a kiss to his cheek. And he doesn’t feel well at all, truly. It’s a relief to sink into the cool sheets while Ilya pads out to the kitchen.

Maybe it’s okay to be taken care of, once in a while?

The phone buzzes next to Shane’s cheek, several times in rapid succession.



7:05 am, Coach

Feel better, Hollander! Keep us updated and contact the team doctor if needed.

7:06 am, Hayden Pike

are you like, dying? you never skip practice

7:07 am, Hayden Pike

blink twice if you've been kidnapped

Shane smiles, and turns his notifications off.

He dozes until Ilya gets back, and while he normally doesn't condone breakfast in bed, today he makes an exception. A headache is creeping in, and once they've eaten Shane flops onto Ilya's chest, pressing his head against the steady beat of his heart.

If a few exhausted tears slip from his eyes into Ilya's soft hoodie, no one will ever know. He's just so thankful for his boyfriend's arms, firmly wrapped around him, and the way Ilya just lets him *exist*, not needing to fill the silence or be interesting or do anything at all.

Shane falls asleep to Ilya idly tracing out *I love you* on his back, through his hoodie.

A few weeks later, the day Montreal plays against Boston, Jared's girlfriend is very confused when he says he's going over to Tom's to watch the game.

"But you said Tom doesn't even care for hockey?"

Her tone is incredulous, but not upset.

Shrugging on his coat and grabbing the bag of snacks he's bringing over, Jared kisses her cheek.

"Eh, his wife and kids are visiting his in-laws, so we'll have a boys night. He let me pick, this time."

As a rule, Jared tries not to lie, but in this instance, it's easier to smooth things over than discuss why he and Tom want to watch the game in total privacy so they can dissect their knowledge and compare it to what they see on camera.

And *boy*, do they see things on camera.

"Are hockey fans just blind?" Tom asks bluntly as Ilya Rozanov fucking winks at Shane Hollander on screen, murmuring something too low and quick for the camera to catch over face-off.

Hollander blushes just as easily as he did when they saw him live, but wins the puck.

“Yeah,” Jared says dazedly. “We must be. *How* long has this been going on for?”

In the intermission, they watch Rozanov skate by Hollander, chirping something, and Hollander rolls his eyes in response, but the smile on his face is fond.

“Fuck it, we need a deep dive,” Tom says, and digs out his iPad. Jared shuffles closer, placing the bowl of nachos he’s holding on the table. His girlfriend would tell them they look like two grannies settling down to discuss their grandchildren’s love life, but Jared doesn’t give a shit.

They watch a few old interviews and clips from YouTube, and then take a break from their analysis of those to analyze the game instead. Watch Rozanov slam Hollander against the boards, whisper something in his ear with an intense look on his face that *could* be taken as rivalry, but...

“It’s like watching two horny teenagers circling each other.”

Clearly, Tom agrees with Jared’s assessment that what they’re seeing is *desire*.

They find a clip of an All Star game where Rozanov actually fucking kisses Hollander (not on the mouth, but still) and several interviews in which the two exchange sneaky glances.

“Look, Rozanov is fucking mooning after Hollander when he’s not looking,” Jared points out. “Shit, that’s from 2015. Think it’s been going on that long?”

Tom shrugs.

“Who knows?”

In the Boston vs. Montreal game on TV, someone tackles Hollander and ends up in the penalty box, and while the camera zooms in on the player there first, it sweeps over the Boston bench next, where Rozanov is sending a glare at his own player. It could be easily interpreted as a captain pissed off at his own player for getting a penalty and putting them at a disadvantage, if Rozanov didn’t swing his eyes back towards the ice, looking *worried*.

Ilya Rozanov is *never* outwardly worried about his team’s chances, always cocky to the very end. But Hollander is skating again, rubbing his ribs lightly over the padding, no worse for wear. It gives Jared an idea.

“Oh, look up the clip from 2017 when Hollander gets injured in a game against Boston!”

It occurs to Jared that they are two grown men, behaving like total fangirls – especially when they accidentally end up on some questionable tumblr tags – but he shrugs it off. They aren’t doing it to be mean, nor do they intend to ever share the connections they’re drawing. It won’t hurt anyone, and no one will ever know.

Tom pulls up the clip, and they both watch it. Watch the way Rozanov sticks close to Hollander while they wait for the medics, how he’s forced back but doesn’t leave, constantly talking even though the camera can’t pick out his words. He seems frantic, and yeah, that’s terror on his face.

The clip ends, and Jared and Tom share a look, stunned.

“Yeah, safe to say this isn’t a new thing.” So maybe Jared’s voice is a bit shaky, but that was an emotional clip. Tom nods, and they turn to the TV again, watching the game end.

“Those boys are going to have a fucking tough time hiding it, and a worse time if they ever come out,” Tom says quietly as Rozanov and Hollander shake hands and exchange a few tense words. “Can’t imagine hockey fans are the most tolerant people.”

“Nope,” Jared acknowledges, popping the P. “Can’t say I envy them.”

“Nothing we can do for them but keep our mouths shut,” Tom adds, and they both know they will.

Then in March 2021, on Jared’s day off, Tom calls Jared.

They’re no longer working the same shifts as often, but often enough, and they keep in contact anyway. Especially since Tom and his wife are godparents to Jared’s little girl.

“Did you *see* what’s trending on twitter?!”

Tom is almost screaming, and Jared is instantly putting him on speaker phone, pulling up the app.

“No, what?”

“Remember that one time we did a test on Ilya Rozanov—”

“*No*,” Jared gasps. “Did they come out?”

“Unfortunately not.” Jared can practically hear the grimace on Tom’s face. His fingers fly over the phone keyboard, typing *Rozanov* and hitting search. “They were outed.”

Jared watches the clip, sees how it zooms in on the background, where Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander are kissing passionately.

“Wow, that is a kiss, alright,” he blurts, and Tom snorts. “And fuck this *Brad*, whoever he is!”

“Should have kept his goddamn mouth shut,” Tom agrees.

When Rozanov’s and Hollander’s accounts post a shared statement, Jared and Tom aren’t in the least surprised.



Jared Brown

@brown_jareddd

It's been a joy watching you play all these years @ilyarozanov and @shanehollanderhockeyplayer and it will continue to be so. Fuck you, Brad, whoever you are. We don't out people against their will 🙄

#loveislove #hollanov

03/17/21, 1:10pm



Ilya Rozanov

@ilyarozanov

Here's a guy that can keep his mouth shut @brown_jareddd . Cheers to you and your DCO buddy for giving us a few years of calm before the storm

03/20/21, 7:43am

Jared Brown

@brown_jaredd

It's been a joy watching you play all these years @ilyarozanov and @shanehollanderhockeyplayer and it will continue to be so. Fuck you, Brad, whoever you are. We don't out people against their will 🙄

#loveislove #hollanov

Ilya Rozanov

@ilyarozanov

Here's a guy that can keep his mouth shut @brown_jareddd. Cheers to you and your DCO buddy for giving us a few years of calm before the storm



Jared Brown

@brown_jareddd

Thanks for the puck @ilyarozanov and
@shanehollanderhockeyplayer, she
loves it!

#futurehockeyplayer

04/11/21, 3:12pm



Jared Brown

@brown_jareddd

Thanks for the puck @ilyarozanov and @shanehollanderhockeyplayer, she loves it!
#futurehockeyplayer

Attached image: A small girl in overalls and blue skates on ice with a small hockey stick and a puck.

End Notes

Hope you liked it! I feel a bit shy dipping my toes in a new fandom, actually. That's not to say I've not got more fic half-written, though...

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