

The Hickey

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The Hickey

by [dntat](#)

Summary

Three times Ilya can't resist marking what's his, and one time Shane decides to return the favor.

Or: Shane and Ilya's first season together on the Centaurs. Includes teasing teammates, introspection, therapy, personal growth, lots of sex and an attempt to bring home the Stanley Cup.

(Also: A story about learning how to accept your true self and all the joy that can come from that.)

Notes

Prompt: ilya leaving hickies on shane and shane getting teased by the centaurs and then Shane gets revenge and does it back. your choice for how explicit you want to go!

My apologies in advance to your request, as it got entirely out of hand and transformed into something I wasn't expecting. I hope you still enjoy!

This one took a village but I would like to give a special shoutout to the Loons who read this over and shouted their encouragement, including [shanehollandertwentyfour](#), [theoneiam2277](#) and [canadianwolfbird](#)!

Chapter 1: October 2021

Chapter Notes

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

OCTOBER 2021

Shane had been really hoping he would get away with no one noticing.

He'd been strategic about it. He'd dressed quickly in his stall after the game, tugging his shirt collar just a little bit higher than usual. And he almost had it. He had been so close. But then Wyatt had sidled up next to him and it had been game over.

"You still on for visiting the kids at the rec centre this weekend?" Wyatt had asked as he threw his tie around his neck.

Shane nodded. "Yeah. Ilya and I will both be there." He blushed a little, and hated himself for it.

He was still getting used to all this. Being out. Like really out. Not just hockey players gossiping behind his back out, or carefully managed press releases out. But casual, day-to-day, talking to his coworkers about his husband out.

He fucking hated that talking about Ilya was still hard for him sometimes. He knew – he knew! – that the team was aware they were together. Most of them had been to their wedding! Yet a stubborn, anxious part of his brain still screamed that saying "*Ilya and I*" was an invitation for trouble. A call for narrowed eyes and judging glares and sneering comments of, "Don't you two hate each other?"

It was annoying. It was frustrating. It was a personal flaw that sometimes felt like it penetrated the very core of his being. He should not feel awkward mentioning his husband. Especially when talking to Wyatt, who was not only a confirmed ally but a genuine friend.

"Okay, great!" Wyatt said, oblivious to Shane's internal turmoil. "Need me to text you the address?"

Shane shook his head. "It's okay, I still have it from last time." He moved to grab his deodorant from his stall. His hand met empty air. He frowned and turned to face the rest of the dressing room, his gaze immediately flying to where Ilya was chatting with Nick Chouinard. His husband was shirtless, which was not unusual, and applying Shane's own deodorant, which... was also not unusual.

Shane turned back to Wyatt quickly, not wanting to be caught staring. The other man's eyes were wide, and his lips were twisted up into a knowing smile. "That's quite the bruise you've got there, buddy," the goalie said.

A flush of embarrassment coursed through Shane and he cursed inwardly. It was the twist of his head that had done it. He had accidentally exposed the *huge fucking hickey* Ilya had given last night.

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Shane was halfway through his yoga routine when Ilya came to join him in their home gym.

Shane knew better than to practice in just his shorts if he wanted to get through the entire routine. Which was, of course, exactly why he was wearing them. And only them. Ilya was always weak for the combination of exposed skin, flushed cheeks and general flexibility. Paired with the three inch inseam and it was a lost cause.

He was deep in a forward fold, palms flat on the mat, when he heard Ilya's footsteps approaching. He straightened his back with intentional slowness. A moment later, large, warm hands were pressing into the dimples at the base of his spine, pulling him back against an already half-erect cock.

"You are looking very distracting today," Ilya said as he pressed himself against Shane.

Shane let his head fall back on Ilya's shoulder as an amused smile teased his lips. "What? I'm just stretching."

Ilya kissed the sensitive spot behind Shane's ear. "I am thinking you are being distracting on purpose," he countered as his hands slid from Shane's back to his hips. A moment later, Shane found himself with his back against his mat, and Ilya hovering overtop of him. His husband unceremoniously pulled down Shane's shorts, and grinned when he found nothing underneath.

"Eager," Ilya said.

Shane helped him by kicking them the rest of the way off. "*Someone* is always impatient."

"*Someone* is not so good at hiding what he wants," Ilya retorted as he hitched one of Shane's legs around his waist and pulled a packet of lube from his pocket.

Shane arched an eyebrow. "And you were just carrying that around with you?"

Ilya ripped the packet open with his teeth, then grinned at Shane. "Is always important when I have such a sure thing," he said, squeezing the liquid onto his fingers and tossing the empty packet aside.

Shane glared and Ilya kissed his nose. "I will pick it up after."

Pacified, Shane relaxed as Ilya's fingers began to open him. Ilya's lips found Shane's neck, where he began pressing open-mouthed kisses to the faint layer of sweat there. Shane used to find it a bit gross when Ilya did this, but now he accepted that the other man just loved the taste of him.

"I'm ready," Shane gasped out as Ilya bit him particularly hard. "Ilya, come on."

"Such an impatient slut," Ilya said from his neck, and pressed deeper into him.

Shane groaned at the intrusion. It wasn't that he didn't enjoy the careful way Ilya prepared him. It was its own kind of pleasure, and a distant, pragmatic part of Shane appreciated that Ilya always took the time to make sure he was ready. It was just that another part of him, a bigger part, wanted Ilya to be fucking him twenty minutes ago when he had first pulled on these shorts on and started his yoga routine.

He thrust against his husband. "Come on, Ilya. Please."

Finally he got what he wanted. Ilya quickly pushed off his own shorts and slid into him with one smooth motion. After waiting just a moment for them both to adjust to the sensation, he began pounded into Shane with all his considerable strength, chasing his pleasure. The relentless rhythm had Shane throwing his hands back, bracing himself against the mirrored wall as Ilya took everything he needed from Shane, but gave everything he wanted in return. He was flying towards the edge almost immediately.

"Ilya," he gasped, at a loss for other words than his husband's name. "Ilya, Ilya."

He managed to get a hand between them, to grab his dick, and soon he was coming, the wet heat shooting between them. Ilya bit down hard on the curve of his shoulder and Shane arched off the mat as his body was swept through the combination of pleasure and pain. A moment later, Ilya was pulsing inside of him with a groan.

Afterwards, as they lay together and caught their breath, Ilya propped himself up on an elbow to look at Shane. A chagrined look crossed on his face and he gently ran a finger down the line of Shane's neck, ending at his clavicle.

"Moya lyubov," he said. *My love*. "I think you will have a bruise."

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At the time Shane had fucking loved it. Now, he slapped a hand on his neck, covering the mark. "I'd really rather not talk--"

"You get hit, Hollzy?" Bood broke in from the stall beside them. He leaned around the divider. "I didn't see it. What's the injury?"

Shane shook his head, his hand still on his neck. "No, it's nothing--"

"I didn't see anything either," Evan said, crossing the room to crowd around Shane with the others.

"Guys, I promise you it's nothing," Shane said desperately. He could feel the heat of the blush that was starting to stain his cheeks.

"Let us see, Hollzy," Bood insisted. He was using his assistant captain's voice now. "I don't want you to feel like you have to hide injuries or play through pain just because you're the newest member of the team."

“It’s really nothing,” Shane said again. “I promise.”

“Then let us see, Hollander.” A Russian-accented voice joined the conversation. “Should not be a big deal, yes? If it is nothing.”

Shane glared at his husband, who had joined the semicircle of concerned teammates. Ilya knew exactly what he was hiding. But with his teammates waiting expectantly around him, Shane sighed and took his hand off his neck.

Bood whistled. “Whoa. Okay. I see why you were trying to keep that to yourself.”

Shane knew he was blushing furiously now, but couldn’t help it. The hickey was dark, sitting just above the curve where his shoulder met his neck. He had managed to hide it all through practice, but of course their sharp-eyed goalie had spotted it the moment he got close.

“Damn Shane,” Evan said, a laugh in his voice. “I have some concealer if you wanna borrow it.”

Bood looked at Evan with amusement. “Why do you have concealer?”

“Man, that stuff is great. Gotta little skin issue? Rub some on and boom, it’s gone. I swear women have been holding out on us. They’ve got some good shit.”

Bood considered this. “You think it comes in Shane’s skin tone though?”

Evan nodded. “Oh for sure, the shades have really been branched out, you know? Caitlin has separate types and colours just for different parts of her face. We could hit up a Shoppers right now and get Shane colour-matched by one of their makeup people in a minute.”

Bood looked impressed. “There’s a Shoppers like two blocks from here. Hollzy, what do you think? Want to head over now?”

Shane was done with this conversation. “No, please, it’s fine. I’m fine. It’s fine. I don’t need concealer. Can we please talk about something else?”

“Other than Ilya’s need to mark his territory?” Bood joked, elbowing the tall Russian.

Ilya threw an arm around Shane, who just barely managed to hold back a flinch at the sudden, open contact. “I have already made my claim when I married him,” he announced to the room. “Everything else is just for fun.”

“Fun?” Troy said from his stall across from Shane. “Roz, you’ll be lucky if you’re not fined for damaging team property.”

A fresh wave of laughter erupted. Shane felt Ilya’s arm tighten around his shoulders. He was sure the gesture was meant to be supportive but it was just making his anxiety and embarrassment rise even higher.

“Is impossible,” Ilya declared to their laughing teammates. “My husband is not team property, he is my property. I do not share.”

“Oh my god,” Shane muttered. He wished, not for the first time in his life, that he could smash his way through the locker room wall and escape this situation. Instead, he tried to extract himself from Ilya’s grip, but his husband just held him tighter.

Wyatt shot Shane an apologetic look. “Sorry, bud. I didn’t mean to get them all jumping on you like this.”

Shane glanced at Ilya. His husband was laughing at something Bood had said, his smile wide and unguarded. He looked so happy. Shane knew *he* loved this. Loved the public declaration, the possessive marks, the team knowing exactly who Shane belonged to. And a part of Shane, the part that still got a thrill when Ilya looked at him with adoration in his eyes, loved it too. But the larger, more pragmatic part of him was deeply embarrassed and inexplicably afraid.

“It’s okay,” Shane sighed as he finally managed to extricate himself from Ilya’s hold. “It’s not *your* fault.” He grabbed his jacket and pulled it on, yanking the collar as high as it would go.

Ilya, sensing Shane was reaching the end of his rope, turned to Evan. “What is this I hear about you DJing now, Dykstra?”

As Evan launched into a nuanced spiel about the upswing of country music in drum and bass remixes, the team finally began to disperse.

Shane bent down to tie his shoes and Ilya sat beside him, his voice dropping as he spoke for Shane’s ears alone. “You are very cute when you are flustered, moya lyubov.”

Shane didn’t look up, and instead yanked on his laces. “You’re so annoying.”

Ilya’s fingers brushed against the back of his neck, just below the hairline. A small apology. “Yes. But you love me.”

Shane finally met his gaze. The smugness was gone from Ilya’s face, replaced by a devastating fondness.

“I do,” Shane sighed. He felt tired. Drained. His shoulders slumped.

Ilya looked at him intently. “I know,” he finally said. “Now let’s go home.”

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The hickey conversation, or rather Ilya’s pleased reaction to it, stuck with Shane over the following days. He was reminded, not for the first time, of Ilya’s words, spoken as they drove home together one night more than a year ago. “*I would never stop showing you off, if I could.*”

Well, he could show Shane off now, and he had stuck to his word. Shane was the frequent recipient of Ilya’s affectionate touches and casual kisses. He was the star of Ilya’s Instagram posts. The topic of his conversations. More than once, Shane had heard Ilya going on to their teammates about one thing or another he had done. “Shane made the most amazing chicken parmesan last night,” or “Shane lost terribly at tennis yesterday, he is a *very* sore loser,” or “Shane now knows three different Cardi B songs.” Even when Ilya was teasing him, it made

Shane's heart clench in his chest, to know his husband was so happy to speak about him. Would take any chance he could to involve Shane in every aspect of his life.

It was these thoughts that stayed with him as he scrolled through yet another directory of therapists online. Ilya was asleep in the bed, cuddled up behind him, a possessive arm thrown around Shane's chest. Shane lay on his side with his phone, the brightness turned down low to not disturb his husband.

The night the team had teased Shane for the bruise on his neck, Ilya had tumbled them both into bed. He had ensured Shane was thoroughly satisfied, leaving him boneless and pliant on the sheets. Then afterwards, cleaned up and wrapped up in each other, Ilya had gently traced the bruise on Shane's neck and said casually, so casually it must have been premeditated, "You know, therapy has helped me a lot. I am thinking it could help you also."

Shane had bristled at first. Had almost rolled out of bed and left Ilya there. He didn't need therapy. The last thing he needed was another person prying into his personal life, thank you very much.

But then he had taken a moment to consider. Ilya had made huge strides since starting therapy. He was more patient. Calmer. More settled in himself. And their relationship was stronger for it. The least Shane could do was match Ilya's efforts. If not for himself, for *them*.

And a part of himself, the part he was never fully able to turn off, the competitive streak that sat too close to the surface, didn't like the idea that Ilya was excelling in an area where he was failing. Where he wasn't even trying.

So Shane lay curled up in bed with his husband asleep behind him while he searched and searched. He was looking for someone specific. He wasn't sure *who* yet, but he knew he wouldn't settle for anything less.

He filtered for those who specialized in LGBT issues, for those who specialized in anxiety, for those who specialized in the unique needs of high-profile individuals. He rejected anyone whose photo looked too stern, whose biography used too much jargon, whose website was too full of gimmicky language.

He finally landed on Dr. Wendy Park. Her profile picture showed a middle-aged woman with long dark hair and a warm smile. Her biography mentioned experience working with public figures. And what cinched it for Shane was the mention of "supporting clients through the anxiety involved with coming out to friends, family and the public." It had felt like a sign.

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Now, only a few days later, he was already sitting in Dr. Park's quiet, carpeted waiting room, feeling anything but sure about the situation. Really he felt like all the certainty and confidence he had about this decision had leaked out of him since he had sent his first email to Dr. Park, requesting this session.

He checked his phone for the fifth time. 2:55pm. Another five minutes until his appointment. He sighed. Ilya had promised to meet him afterwards with a treat ("It will be healthy! I

promise.”) and a part of Shane wished he was here now. Or, even better, that he was with Ilya, away from this place.

But no. He *had* to do this. For himself and for Ilya.

The door across the room opened. Shane pulled his baseball cap down and looked at his phone as a woman bustled out the waiting room door. Then a warm voice called out. “Shane? I’m ready for you now.”

Shane stood. It was time to get past this. To leave all his anxiety and worry and pain and fear behind. He took a deep breath that did little to calm the frantic beating of his heart and stepped through the open door.

Chapter End Notes

Kudos and comments are like Ilya's lube packets - greatly appreciated by the receiver.

Also if you see any mistakes please let me know. I try my hardest to catch them all but a few always seem to slip by.

You can also shout about Hollanov with me on [tumblr](#) or [Instagram](#).

See you next Thursday for the next chapter!

Chapter 2: March 2022

Chapter Notes

DID Y'ALL SEE THE NEW EPISODE STILLS OH MY GOSH. I will never recover.

Endless thanks to [shanehollandertwentyfour](#), [theoneiam2277](#) and [canadianwolfbird](#) for all your help in shaping this chapter up!

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

MARCH 2022

It was an unseasonably beautiful morning for March in Ottawa. The sky was blue, the sun was shining, the air was crisp and Shane was ready to take full advantage of the day.

He carefully scooped his pre-workout supplement into his water bottle and shook the whole concoction. Anya circled around his feet as he chugged the drink down, her energy levels already high, her small paws clacking against the tile floor.

He smiled at her antics, despite the chalky drink.

“You're ready to get out there for a run, aren't you?” he asked as he knelt down to scratch behind her ears. “We need something to do while we wait for you papa to wake up, don't we?”

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Shane woke up earlier that morning to a sleepy Ilya pressing his cock into his ass. It was a slow grind, more instinctual than with any real intent, but it was an opportunity that Shane didn't want to pass up on.

He pushed at Ilya's broad shoulders until the bigger man was sitting up against the headboard. His curls were a mess, his eyes were heavy-lidded, and his erection was jutting out in front of him. He was gorgeous.

“What are you doing, Hollander?” Ilya grumbled, still half asleep.

Shane didn't answer. Instead, crawled into Ilya's lap, straddling his thick thighs. This made his husband open his eyes wider, and his hands moved on Shane's hips, caressing the muscle and bone there.

Grabbing the lube from the bedside table, Shane drizzled some on his fingers. Their erections were close, nearly touching, and Ilya gave a roll of his hips, seeking friction. Shane ignored

the motion, instead reaching around himself and smiling as Ilya's gaze sharpened, snapping to where his hand disappeared behind his back.

The angle was awkward, but the sight of Ilya's intent gaze, the way his cock twitched and jumped against Shane's stomach made it more than worth it. Shane began to roll his hips slightly as he fucked himself on his fingers. First one, then another as he worked himself open.

"Shane," Ilya groaned, his voice gravelly with sleep. His fingers, still pressed into Shane's hips, dug deeper. He hauled Shane closer to him, grinding their cocks together.

"Ilya," Shane breathed in return, and then he pulled free of his husband's grasp and slid down onto him with one smooth motion.

They both gasped when Shane's ass landed on Ilya's thighs, Ilya from the sensation and Shane from the slight burn that accompanied the intrusion. He waited there for a moment, his head thrown back, his long hair tickling his shoulders, until the feeling faded.

"Moy prekrasnyy Shane," Ilya groaned, squeezing his hips. *My beautiful Shane.*

Ready now, Shane began to move. He set a slow pace. "Shane," Ilya gasped again. "Shane, ty menya pogubish." *Shane, you will be the death of me.*

Shane braced a hand against the headboard and rolled his hips in the exact way Ilya liked, slowly increasing his movements until he could feel the burn in his thighs. Ilya kept his gaze locked on Shane the whole time, his hands always moving now, grasping, kneading at Shane's thighs and hips and stomach and chest.

It didn't take Ilya long to go hurtling over the edge. He groaned loudly as he spilled into Shane's body. A wave of fierce possessiveness overcame Shane as his hand went to his dick, squeezing it without moving, mesmerized by the feeling of Ilya's cock throbbing inside him. He loved that he was able to affect Ilya like this. Was able to make him feel like no one else ever had.

Once Ilya had let out several more moans and finished twitching, Shane began jerking himself off in earnest. He loved coming while Ilya was fucking him, but he loved this too, pushing himself over the brink with a stated Ilya buried deep in his ass, his come sliding out of Shane. It made him feel messy and slutty and powerful and depraved, all at once.

Ilya's head fell forward onto Shane's chest, where he began mouthing and licking at Shane's skin, his stubble acting a perfect counterpoint to the wet heat of his tongue as he helped push Shane towards his own orgasm. It didn't take long for Shane to erupt between them, coating Ilya's stomach and chest with his come.

Afterwards, cleaned and sated and content, Ilya had fallen back asleep. Shane couldn't fault him. They had won their game last night, then stayed out late with the team to celebrate. Ilya had been goaded into several rounds of shots with the younger players and ended up quite wasted, while Shane had stuck to beer and then water.

(They had called a car to take them home, and Ilya had draped himself over Shane in the backseat, rubbing a large hand up and down his thigh while whispering slurred words into his ear about all the filthy things he was going to do to him when they got home.

“I will fuck you until you are screaming Hollander. You will be begging for me to finish with you. I will make you come two, three times before I fill your ass.”

Shane had been simultaneously extremely turned on at Ilya’s whispers, endlessly embarrassed at what their driver was seeing and wildly grateful for the NDAs he knew were in effect right now.

At home, Ilya had continued his attempts to get handsy until Shane had forced him to drink a glass of water and pushed him upstairs and into their bed.

“If you're awake when I get back, I'll do a striptease for you and then blow you for an hour,” Shane had said after tucking Ilya in under the sheets. “Then let you do anything you want to me. No limits. You just have to stay awake until I get back.”

Ilya had given him a lascivious, if slightly cross-eyed, look. “I will destroy you, Hollander.”

“Anything you want,” Shane had repeated over his shoulder as he left the room.

“You will not be able to walk for a week,” Ilya had slurred from the bed, his voice already fading.

Shane had given Anya some attention and then headed to the bathroom to quickly work through an abbreviated version of his skincare routine and brush his teeth. When he returned to the bedroom, Ilya had been sprawled out and fast asleep.)

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Now, freshly fucked and with a wiggling, energetic dog on his leash, Shane was feeling good. He was feeling really good, actually, and he let Anya set the pace as they made their way down the driveway.

They looped along Shane's regular route, starting on the street before Anya led them onto the dirt path that wound through the forest near their house.

His new teammates had been shocked to learn Shane liked to run without any sort of entertainment or music. Then they had started teasing him for it, but in a good-natured way. Shane still remembered Ilya’s fond smile as Evan and Tanner had ranted to Shane about beat matching your stride and the other virtues of running while listening to EDM. (Shane still wasn't sure what EDM was, and had been too afraid to ask, lest it encourage more talk from the pair.)

But Shane couldn't imagine running with any distractions anyways. He loved falling into the meditative rhythm set by the pounding of his feet, the feeling of his breathing and the familiarity of the path ahead, one he had worked through hundreds of times since Ilya had first moved to Ottawa.

This was also when Shane did all his best thinking. Undisturbed, unbothered, and with his body occupied, his mind could find answers to his problems more easily than he could in a crowded tape-review session with his teammates, or at home, where Ilya's presence always at the forefront of his thoughts, even if they weren't in the same room together.

Usually, when he was out on these runs, he thought about hockey. How he had played, where he had done well, where there was room for improvement. He often came back home with solutions to problems the team had been having, both on and off the ice.

But in recent months he had also been thinking about his time with Dr. Park as well. They had been meeting weekly since October, and Shane felt like they'd made a lot of progress together. Not to say it hadn't been slow going. The first few months had been incredibly painful. Shane hadn't had the words to explain his feelings, nor really, if he was being completely honest with himself, the interest. Every time Dr. Park had gently asked, "And what came up for you when that happened?" or "How did you feel about that?" he had felt his old defenses go up, and he would either shut down her line of questioning, or avoid it entirely by moving the conversation to different topics.

But seeing Ilya's enthusiasm after he came home from each session, hearing him ask how it went and if Shane wanted to talk about it, knowing his husband was so proud of him for taking this step... It sent Shane back week after week. He even attended sessions through video calls when they were on the road, his iPad propped up on the hotel desk, Ilya temporarily vacating the room to give him some privacy. And in bits and pieces, Shane had slowly lowered his defenses and started to talk.

As Shane ran, the steady rhythm of his movements calming all the thoughts and noise that usually plagued him, he reflected on a session from earlier on in the year. The whole team had gone out for New Years Eve, and afterwards, a photo had hit the media of Shane and Ilya kissing at midnight.

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It was a good photo. That was the most frustrating part, Shane thought as he looked at his phone. They didn't look drunk or sloppy or ridiculous. It was simply a photo of Shane kissing his husband. His mom had even commented on it when she called to wish them both a happy new year, saying how sweet it was.

But the knowledge that countless strangers were now holding a piece of Shane's private life in their hands rankled at him, like an itch he couldn't quite scratch. He had tried to hide his irritation from Ilya by going to their gym, but from the look his husband gave him, the other man was fully aware of his tenuous grip on his emotions.

Later, with Dr. Park, he finally cracked, describing the thoughts that would overtake him when he was seen with Ilya in public.

"It's like... I'm always hyper aware of what's going on around me," he said, the words feeling inadequate to describe his feelings even as he said them. "I'm always looking around to see if people are watching. And if they are, I start wondering what they're saying about me. About us. If someone looks for too long, I think they must be judging me. If someone

laughs, I think it must be a joke at my expense. I want to know what they're saying so I can be prepared for the negativity, but I also don't want to know about it at all."

Dr. Park nodded, her pen posed over her ever-present notebook. "That sounds exhausting. You're trying to manage the thoughts and potential actions of countless people. But that will always be outside of your control." She had paused then, to take a long look at Shane. "What if the goal wasn't to control their perception, but your response to it?"

Shane was silent for a long moment after that. As long as he could remember, he had been trying to control every aspect of his life. His training, his nutrition, the media, other people's perception of him.

"Sometimes I think I like the control too much," he admitted quietly.

Dr. Park's expression remained neutral. It was something Shane appreciated about her. She never made him feel like his thoughts were wrong, or stupid. "Control isn't inherently bad," she said. "It's a tool. It's helped you become an elite athlete. The question is, when does the tool become a cage? You use it in an attempt to feel safe, but at what cost? The constant hyper-vigilance, the over-training, the diet, the inability to relax... that all takes a toll on you."

Shane looked at his feet. "I know I can have... a sort of tunnel vision sometimes," he finally said. "Where all I can see is the goal. And when I'm trying to reach that goal, I struggle to see anything else." He hesitated, fiddling with the brim of his hat as he held it in his lap. "I... I know I've hurt Ilya, without even realizing it, because I was too focused on the end game and didn't see how my actions were affecting him." He finally looked up and met Dr. Park's gaze. "But I don't know how to stop... being that way."

Dr. Park smiled. "The goal isn't to live a life without control, but to learn to wield it wisely. Think of your tunnel vision not as something to break free from, but as a spotlight. A spotlight is powerful, but if you never widen the beam, you'll miss everything happening in the periphery. The skill is learning when to narrow the focus, and when to loosen your hold and let the light flood the entire stage." She smiled again. "Or should I say arena?"

And Shane had taken Dr. Parks' advice on being more selective on what aspects of his life to control to heart. Truly! He practiced daily, starting small. He let Ilya choose a restaurant for them to go to and hadn't researched the menu ahead of time. Then he took a full rest day, and fought off the gnawing guilt by focusing on how his body felt stronger and fresher the next day. He even posted a selfie of him and Ilya on Instagram, much to his husband's delight. And the world, unsurprisingly, did not end.

His new attitude followed him into the locker room. The awkwardness he felt interacting with his new team wasn't completely gone, but it happened less often now. He could say "*Ilya and I*" without feeling like he might have a minor panic attack, and he no longer wanted to pull away when his husband threw a casual arm around his shoulders.

He knew Ilya had noticed the difference as well, and was pleased by the change. It made Shane happy, to know he was making Ilya happy. But even deeper than that, it made Shane happy to know he was learning how to be kind to himself.

He realized he had not been kind to himself, most of his life.

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He was a few kilometres into his run now and a sheen of sweat was coating his skin. Glancing around and seeing the path empty, he made a decision. Without slowing his pace, he reached over his head and pulled his damp shirt off before tucking it into the waistband of his shorts. The cool air was a relief on his overheated skin. Anya barked happily and Shane smiled at her.

“You ready to go a little faster?” he asked the energetic dog. Anya pulled at her leash and Shane laughed, speeding up his pace as they made their way down the trail.

He didn’t think about the bruise on his chest. He hadn’t even noticed it.

He didn’t see the photographer nestled in the treeline, a long lens focused directly on him.

- - - -

Their phones started buzzing that evening. Then they didn’t stop.

Shane was in the kitchen, chopping vegetables for a salad when Ilya walked in, his own phone in his hand.

“Shane,” Ilya began, his tone carefully neutral. “There is a... photo of you. Becoming very popular online.”

Shane looked up, knife poised over a pepper. “A photo?”

“Of you.” Ilya hesitated again. “Running. With Anya.” Ilya turned the screen toward him.

Shane wiped his hands on a towel and took the phone from Ilya’s hand. There he was on the front page of HELLO!, *again*. At least he looked pretty good. The definition of his muscles was amplified by the sweat gleaming on them, and he wasn’t making a weird face, just kind of staring out into the distance. And his long hair, up in a bun, didn’t look wildly disarrayed. But there, on his pec... Shane zoomed in. A bruise. From when Ilya had bit down on Shane earlier that morning. From where he had dug his teeth in the muscle of Shane’s chest as Shane came all over him.

The caption below was in all capitals: "Centaur's Star Shane Hollander Showing Off a New Logo. Source: @IlyaRozanov81?"

Shane blinked. Then he scrolled. The article was insubstantial, just stating that he, Shane Hollander, had been seen with a bruise on his chest and sources could not confirm any more details but it was expected the mark had come from his husband, fellow Centaur's player, Ilya Rozanov.

It was the most barebones piece of gossip that Shane had ever read about himself, yet it had been shared thousands of times. The comments were filled with fire emojis, crying-laughing emojis, and an alarming number of people declaring they were screaming, crying, and

throwing up. Shane frowned. That didn't sound good. He opened Twitter. #WhoHurtShane was trending. Several people had already made what Shane assumed were joke images featuring the mark. Memes, Shane had recently learned they were called. He didn't understand them, but the general sentiment around it all seemed positive, from as far as he could tell.

A year ago, Shane would have had a complete meltdown at this. Privately, of course. As far away from Ilya as he could get. A few months ago, this might have sent him into an anxious spiral where he complained bitterly to Ilya about a lack of privacy, an invasion of a safe space. He would have felt exposed and violated, having his private life splashed across the internet for mockery and consumption.

And he *did* feel those things. Only, they were more muted. And now, standing in his kitchen with his husband watching him warily, a different feeling bubbled up. He thought of Dr. Park asking him, "Where are your feelings of anxiety coming from? Is it because you feel that you have lost control of your personal story? Or a fear of how people will interpret and judge this part of your life?" She had paused then, to look Shane straight in the eye. "And what would it look like to take control of the only thing you truly can in this scenario: your reaction?"

A short laugh escaped him. Then another. He put the knife down, his shoulders shaking, and wiped a tear from his eye.

Ilya's worried expression deepened. "Shane? Are you okay? We can call Farah, have her reach out to them—"

Shane waved a hand, trying to catch his breath. "No, no, don't. It's just... look at this!" He pointed at the screen, at the ridiculous photo. "This is the best thing they have to post today? And they're saying you are the suspected source of the bruise? Who else would it be?"

Ilya's posture relaxed and a slow smile touched his lips. "There better not be anyone else biting you."

"There's nothing here!" Shane said. "They really must be having a fucking bad news day if this is the best thing they have to post."

Ilya wrapped his arms around Shane's waist, pulling him close and pressing a kiss to the top of his head. "Shane," Ilya said into his hair. "They are posting that photo because you look very sexy."

Shane looked up at him, eyes wide. "You think so?"

"I know so," Ilya said. "And yes, it is." He hesitated. "But you are not... upset?"

Shane considered it. The unease and discomfort were still there, but so was something else. A kind of acceptance. "I'm choosing not to be," he said, the words feeling true as he said them. "It's just... people having too much time on their hands. And it's only a big deal if I let it be a big deal. So no, I'm not upset."

Ilya hugged him harder. "I am happy to hear that," he whispered.

Shane hugged his husband back. He was happy too. Happy to have faced this annoyance, this invasion of his personal life, and come out still smiling on the other side. There was still a chance he would fall into a pit of anxiety about it later, but from the look Ilya was giving him, Shane had the feeling there wouldn't be time for that kind of thinking. If he knew his husband at all, he was going to be thoroughly rewarded for his behaviour tonight.

He was about to pick up the knife again but then hesitated. "If the photo is so sexy, why is everyone saying they're throwing up when they see it?"

Ilya pressed a kiss to the skin behind his ear. "Oh, moya lyubov, let me tell you about the Shane Hollander stans."

Shane twisted in his arms. "The *what*?"

- - - -

Shane expected some teasing about his latest feature at practice the next morning, so he braced himself when he stepped through the locker room door. But rather than be greeted with the lightly veiled insults and sharp-tongued barbs he'd endured from the Voyageurs when Cosmopolitan had repeatedly featured him as the Hottest Man in the NHL, he was met with a chorus of catcalls, whistles, and rowdy cheers.

"There he is!" Evan yelled from across the room. "The man of the hour!"

"Why you gotta be showing us all up like that, Hollzy?" Bood followed up, shaking his head in mock despair.

"Dude every woman I know has the photo as their phone screensaver right now," moaned Tanner. "It's unfair to the rest of us."

Ilya's grin was sharp. "Even your wife, yes?"

Tanner rolled his eyes as the team laughed. "Fuck you, Rozanov."

Blushing, but with a strange warmth in his chest, Shane made his way to his stall. A quick glance at Ilya as he moved across the room showed Shane the other man was grinning broadly, as if the praise was for him.

But when he reached his spot, he stopped short. A giant, blown up copy of the photo had been taped to the back of his stall and a bottle of concealer had been stuck directly over the bruise on his chest.

Shane pulled off the bottle and looked around the room. Bood, Evan and Troy were all attempting to look anywhere but at him.

And Shane... laughed. A full, genuine laugh that echoed in the space. He opened the concealer and rubbed some into the skin on the back of his hand. "A perfect match. Thanks guys," he said dryly. "Very thoughtful."

The room broke into fresh grins.

“Just looking out for team assets, Hollander,” Troy said. “Can’t have people thinking you’re injured.”

Evan crossed the room to grab his hand and held it up, peering at it thoughtfully.

“Told you we got it right,” he said to Bood, a proud grin spreading across his face.

“More like *I* got it right,” Bood said. “I knew he had more of a cool undertone. Shane, did you know you had a cool undertone?”

“I didn’t, but consider it duly noted,” Shane said, gently tugging his hand back and pulling his shirt over his head.

As he began gathering together his practice gear, he noticed several flickering glances from around the room; his teammates eyes catching on the bruise on his chest before skittering away. Troy, Shane saw, took an exceptionally long glance, only looking away with a blush when he realized Shane had caught him staring.

As the Centaurs finished dressing and headed towards the ice, Ilya came to sit beside Shane as he laced up his skates. “Everything is okay?”

Shane took a deep breath, then met his gaze. “Yeah,” he said. “It is.”

He saw the worry leave Ilya’s eyes, replaced by a fond, proud gleam. Ilya leaned in, his breath ghosting Shane’s ear. “Good. Because I think of many other places I want to mark you.”

Shane shoved him away, but he was smiling. “You’re so annoying.”

“This you have told me before,” Ilya said as he got up to return to his own stall. “But I seem to remember you love me anyways.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and kudos are like finding your perfect colour match concealer - an unexpected and delightful treat.

Also if you see any mistakes please let me know. I try my hardest to catch them all but a few always seem to slip by.

You can also shout about Hollanov with me on [tumblr](#) or [Instagram](#).

Chapter three drops next Thursday! It has some of my favourite scenes and I'm so excited to share it with you!

Chapter 3: May 2022

Chapter Summary

Y'all we made it. The episodes are dropping tonight. What a journey.

Endless thanks to [shanehollandertwentyfour](#), [theoneiam2277](#) and [canadianwolfbird](#) for helping put this chapter together!

Chapter Notes

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

MAY 2022

Shane tilted his head back as he let the hot water run over him, washing away the sweat of what had been an absolutely brutal game.

The New York Admirals were always a tough team to play and tonight had been no exception. Matti Jalo had been particularly aggressive, shadowing Shane tightly whenever they were on the ice together. The man was an absolute monster, and had knocked Shane against the boards more than once, much to the annoyance of the other Centaurs, who had retaliated with force and earned themselves some time in the penalty box.

Despite it all, Shane had managed to dodge Jalo enough times to score two goals, setting the Centaurs ahead with a 3-2 win.

So yes, it was safe to say he was tired. Tired and sore and ready to be at home in his bed. But it was the good kind of tired. The kind that came from leaving everything on the ice.

After the game, the media had crowded around him at his stall, wanting their soundbites.

“Shane, you scored two goals out there tonight and brought the victory home for the team,” one reporter led with, as if Shane wasn’t aware of what he had accomplished. “What was going through your head?”

“I was just feeling grateful to the team,” Shane said. “The guys made some great plays to set me up.”

“Shut the fuck up, Hollander!” Bood’s voice cut across the locker room. “That second one was a breakaway! That was all you, man.”

A few of the other guys yelled their agreement, and Shane felt a blush spread across his cheeks. He gave the cameras an embarrassed smile. “Someone still had to pass me the puck.”

Another reporter spoke up. "You took some big hits from Jalo tonight. How did that feel?"

Shane gave himself the span of a blink to slip his media face back on. "Jalo is a great player," he said, all polite professionalism. "He's not someone who's going to hold back. You just have to play through it, and that's what I tried to do."

"And how are we feeling about the Centaur's playoff chances?" another reporter called.

Shane gave a tight smile. "We're taking it one day at a time."

He offered more polite, slightly boring answers and finally, eventually, the media crews packed up their cameras and microphones and recorders and let him be.

Having been delayed for so long, the showers were mostly empty when he got there, which he was grateful for. He wasn't in the mood for more chatter.

For a long moment, he simply stood under the spray with his head tilted back, letting the water pound against the tight muscles of his shoulders and chest. Some tension relieved, he leaned forward, putting his face under the spray. He emerged feeling calmer and more centred, some of the game's adrenaline and stress washed away. Shane pushed his wet hair back with a relaxed sigh. He was proud of what he had accomplished during the game, and could be a little indulgent.

He heard the shower next to him turn on, but paid it no mind, lost in the steam and the heat.

A minute later, however, a tentative voice cut through the haze. "Hey, Shane?"

Shane cracked an eye open as a tendril of annoyance crept down his spine. He just wanted a few minutes to himself. But Troy was standing there, his gaze fixed on a point below Shane's waist, and he looked... concerned.

Shane followed his eyes down to what Troy was looking at, and then back up to his teammates' wide-eyed face.

"Yeah?" Shane asked, shifting slightly.

"Your, uh... your ass. I mean, glute. The left one. It's looking... I mean. You've got some bruises. Are those from Jalo? I didn't really see all the hits he gave you so I'm not sure how hard you went against the boards, but, uh, you know, sometimes those things don't show up until later." Troy's concern was admirable, even as he stammered through his words. "You might want to think about seeing the team doctor, if they get worse?"

Shane closed his eyes. He could feel his old instinct to flinch, to cover up, to mutter an excuse, welling up in him. But that voice was fainter now. Dr. Park's voice was clearer: *"You are allowed to exist in your body, and your body is allowed to show the evidence of your life, including your relationship. You cannot always control what people see, or what they think. You can control whether you are going to spend your energy worrying about that or not."*

Shane had not gotten those bruises from Matti Jalo knocking him into the boards. He had gotten them from Ilya, just the other day.

It was one of those rare days where they both had nothing planned and Shane, feeling a little wicked, decided to make the most of it.

He pulled on his shortest shorts and one of Ilya's old crewneck sweaters. Ilya had cropped it last spring and worn it with annoying frequency. The frayed hem had ridden high on his long torso, exposing most of his toned stomach, much to the detriment of Shane's ability to stay off his knees for his husband. Which, Shane could admit, was definitely why Ilya wore it so much.

Now it was faded and soft and stretched out and Shane was ready to use it to his full advantage.

He started his game by working through a casual stretching session in the living room while Ilya watched TV. At least Ilya attempted to watch TV. Each time Shane reached for the ceiling, the sweater would rise up, revealing more of his toned stomach. When he bent forward, the neckline gaped, teasing a glimpse of his collarbone and chest. Shane was pleased to see that Ilya's gaze rarely made it to the screen in front of him.

The performance continued throughout the day. Shane fiddled with the hem of the sweater, pulling on it repeatedly to expose more skin whenever he and Ilya spoke. When they made lunch, he pushed the sleeves up over his forearms, and perhaps flexed more than strictly necessary. When they sat at the table to eat, he pulled the collar to the side, exposing the line of his collarbone, the expanse of his shoulder. Ilya's eyes travelled over each bit of revealed skin.

Later in the afternoon, Ilya put on music and Shane swayed his hips as he made his way through the house, picking up loose items in preparation for the cleaning crew that would be coming the next day.

("Shane, we hire them to clean," Ilya always said, but Shane didn't like having their personal life strewn about for strangers to look at.)

He felt extremely self-conscious, ridiculous even, as he weaved his way from room to room. But then he saw Ilya staring at him. It was easy to see that Ilya was captivated by him. Was absolutely burning with desire for him. It was obvious in his fixated eyes. In the tense lines of his body. So Shane continued the slow roll of his hips, the leisurely flex of his waist, as he allowed the beat of the music to guide his movements.

And all day, Ilya tried to fuck him. Had tried and tried and tried.

He pulled Shane onto his lap while he was watching TV, his large hands plunging into Shane's shorts to grab his ass. He tackled Shane onto the bed, pressing his erection firmly against Shane's back after Shane had performed a particularly theatrical stretch that hitched the cropped sweater up to his ribs. He pinned Shane against the wall as he danced, his hot mouth finding the exposed skin of Shane's collarbone and biting down.

But Shane, with a resolve that impressed even himself, rebuffed him at every turn. Ilya had been surprised at first, but then his gaze had narrowed and a crooked grin had taken over his face.

“You are thinking you can resist for long, Hollander?” Ilya had asked.

“You just fucking wait,” Shane had breathed, feeling the same competitive streak that had ruled so much of his life once again rear its head inside of him.

For the entire day, Shane teased Ilya with movements and looks and touches. And for the entire day, Ilya *writhed* in his want for Shane. He was barely able to keep his hands to himself. He was constantly touching Shane, stroking him, rubbing him. He crowded Shane against walls and furniture to grind his cock against him, to kiss his lips, his nose, his forehead, his neck, to breathe in the scent of his hair.

It was after dinner that Shane finally broke.

He hadn't even been trying to tease Ilya at that moment. He had simply come back downstairs to find Ilya staring at the muted TV with a glazed look in his eyes.

Sitting beside Ilya on the couch, Shane stroked a hand over his husband's hair. The brown curls were so unlike his own straight, dark strands; he was always fascinated by how they would spring back into place after a gentle tug.

Ilya caught his hand and brought it to his lips, kissing his palm before turning to face Shane fully. He looked wrecked.

“Shane, pozhaluysta,” he said. *Shane, please.*

“Pozhaluysta, chto?” Shane teased, bringing Ilya's hand to rest over his heart. *Please, what?*

Ilya's hand spread across Shane's chest before sliding up to cradle his neck, his thumb pressing into the hinge of Shane's jaw. Shane could see the restraint in the lines of his body. Could feel it in the tension of his hand. "Ty pobedil. Ty segodnya byl takoy seksual'nyy," he said. "Day mne tebya trakhnut", pozhaluysta." *You win. You have been so sexy today. Let me fuck you, please.*

Shane smiled slowly. He felt sexy. He felt *powerful*. It was heady, having a man like Ilya Rozanov wrapped around his finger. “Da,” he murmured. *Yes.*

The noise Ilya made was one of profound relief, although Shane knew with absolute certainty if he brought it up later his husband would deny it.

But Shane was done with this game, too. He didn't want to wait another moment to have Ilya's hands on him. It was so often Shane begging, him pleading. For Ilya to ask this way... it obliterated the last shred of his restraint. Absolutely destroyed his need to compete. Completely annihilated his desire to have anything, *anything* between them. He crawled into Ilya's lap and their mouths crashed together in a furious, messy kiss as they let all the pent up frustration from the day out.

Ilya's hands were roaming over him, gripping his hair, his neck, sliding over his shoulders, down his chest, his hips, into his shorts until finally, finally they found it. The plug Shane had put in his ass while he was upstairs.

Ilya groaned into Shane's mouth at the discovery. "You have been such a *slut* today," he growled, twisting the base roughly. Shane moaned in response. The noise seemed to break something within Ilya, because he was suddenly ripping off their clothes without finesse and pushing Shane onto his back. He twisted the plug once, twice, making Shane gasp and writhe, before pulling it out and throwing it carelessly onto the floor.

Ilya stared down. Shane was open, lubed and ready for him.

"Fuck, Shane," Ilya groaned before spitting on his hand, wiping it on his cock, and driving into Shane with one long thrust.

Shane gasped at the sensation, at the feeling of fullness, at the roughness of Ilya's movements. Ilya set a punishing pace, snapping his hips against the back of Shane's thighs while gripping his legs to his chest. *This* is what Shane had wanted, what he had been thinking about, dreaming about, *craving* all day. The fullness, the feeling of completion, of achievement, of *rightness* that came from being fucked by his husband.

Ilya felt amazing inside of him. He always felt amazing, but after all the teasing and buildup of the day, Shane was blissed out beyond measure. He looked up at Ilya, trying to find the words, desperate to convey what this meant to him, what *Ilya* meant to him. But Ilya's eyes were widening and his thrusts were getting more sporadic and then he was groaning and seizing and shuddering and coming, deep inside Shane.

Shane took a breath, then another, surprise coursing through him. That had been... fast. He opened his mouth, a teasing remark at the ready, but it was cut off when Ilya moved. With one quick motion, he flipped Shane over onto his hands and knees. Before Shane could even process the movement, Ilya dug his fingers into Shane's ass, pulling him open and licking deep into him. Devouring him. Claiming him. Owning him entirely.

Shane arched and moaned. Ilya tightened his grip in response, pushing his tongue deeper. It was all so much – Ilya's strong hands, his soft tongue, Shane's sensitive hole – Shane felt overcome, *overwhelmed* with sensation.

Then Ilya reached around him and grabbed Shane's leaking cock.

Coherent thought left him. Shane was lost. Completely blissed out with pleasure. Ilya jerked him off with one hand while his other held his ass in a fierce grip. And all the while, his mouth was everywhere, sucking and fucking, biting and licking all across him, leaving bites and bruises and destruction in his wake. It wasn't long before Shane was coming, painting hot stripes all over the couch.

Afterwards, they lay together, panting and laughing and kissing until Shane had insisted they get up to clean the couch and take a shower.

It had truly been a perfect day.

- - - -

Now Shane opened his eyes and looked at Troy. The other man's eyes immediately flicked away from Shane's ass and were now staring studiously over Shane's shoulder.

"No," Shane said. His voice was calm. He *felt* calm. "I didn't get injured on the ice. Those bruises are from Ilya."

Troy's eyes widened and a flush crept up his neck. He blinked, his gaze momentarily darting back down to Shane's ass, to the tiled wall, the ceiling, then to the floor. "Oh. Right. Okay. Uh... good. That's... good." He fumbled with the knob of his own shower, turning the water off with a sudden, jerky motion. "I'll, uh... I'll leave you to it."

He grabbed his towel and was gone a moment later, his retreating footsteps slapping quickly against the wet floor.

Shane turned back to the spray and finished his shower in peace.

Later, after he had gotten dressed in his street clothes and was packing the gear he wanted to bring back home, Ilya sidled up to his stall. His husband's expression held an unfamiliar look of mild suspicion.

"What was Troy's problem in there?" Ilya asked. "He ran out of the showers and then left without even saying anything."

Shane zipped up his bag, a small feeling of amusement rising in his chest. "He noticed the huge fucking bruises you left on my ass the other day and was worried I had been injured during the game. Was wondering if I should go see the team doctor."

Ilya's eyebrows shot up and he straightened up from where he had been leaning against Shane's stall. "He was looking at you in the shower?"

Something in the way Ilya spoke made Shane pause. This wasn't his husband's usual teasing tone. This was something edged with a genuine annoyance.

Shane turned to face him. "What's going on here? You've teased me for literal years about how Troy looked at you in the showers."

"That is different," Ilya muttered, crossing his arms over his chest. His biceps bulged. It was annoying, a distant part of Shane thought, how attractive Ilya looked even when he was being weird.

"Different how?" Shane asked. He felt genuinely baffled.

"It is different," Ilya insisted. "The chest... anyone can see that. But the rest?" He scowled. "That is for me."

Shane stared at him, realization sinking in. Then a slow smile spread across his face. He stepped closer, into Ilya's space, and smiled up at him. "You're jealous."

"I am not jealous," Ilya grumbled, staring somewhere above Shane's head.

"Sure you're not." Shane's smile widened. He found he didn't mind this. Not at all. It was completely dumb and unnecessary, but it was also... nice. "For the record, he was just concerned, and being a good friend. And I told him, very clearly, that the bruises were from you. That's when he ran away."

Ilya's gaze finally dropped to his, the annoyance softening an unbelievable amount of fondness. "You are saying that to him?"

"Word for word," Shane confirmed. "'Those are from Ilya.' And I feel... fine about it. Good, even."

He didn't have to tell Ilya that he had been blushing the whole time. Troy probably couldn't even tell with the heat of the shower anyways.

Ilya uncrossed his arms and wrapped Shane up in a hug. "Good," he said. He leaned in, his forehead touching Shane's. "They will have to get used to it, after all. Is still my favorite place to leave a mark."

"I know," Shane said, a bit bitchily, but he was smiling. He was surrounded by the scent of Ilya's soap and his husband's irrational, all-consuming love. It was annoying how perfect it was, really. "Now can we go home? I'm tired of discussing my ass with my coworkers."

"Da," Ilya said, pressing a quick, hard kiss to his lips. "We can go home."

- - - -

A few days later, Shane was sitting in Dr. Parks' office. Dr. Park sat across from him, her trusty notepad balanced on her knee, her expression filled with warm attention.

"So," she said. "You mentioned something significant happened in the locker room this week."

Shane nodded as a small, almost disbelieving laugh escaped him. He quickly told her about the moment in the shower and about his own response. "A year ago... hell, a few months ago, I would have just said it was from the fall on the ice. And I would have been horrified, the whole time. But I just... told him the truth. And it was fine. More than fine, it was... really nice. To not have to keep those things separate." He grimaced. "Or to lie."

Dr. Park's smile was genuine. "That's a substantial shift, Shane. What was different this time?"

He thought about it, searching for the words. "It's like... before, I was always focused controlling the narrative. Because my public life and my private life were two totally separate sides of me, and my private life was something that I had to protect at all costs from *becoming* my public life. But now?" He shook his head. "Now it feels like my private life is just.. my life. The one I've worked really hard to build. And the public evidence of it..."

doesn't need to be a secret. I mean, I don't want *everything* out there. But a few pieces every now and then?" He paused, trying to truly consider how he felt. "It's... okay."

"And you chose to talk about an aspect of your private life," Dr. Park noted. "With someone outside your core group of friends, in a moment where it was relevant. That's a sign of incredible growth. You're integrating the parts of your life that you used to keep compartmentalized."

"I'm less... worried," Shane admitted. "Sometimes it feels like I'm finally just *living* for the first time since I was seventeen. And most of the time, it feels really fucking good."

"I'm very glad to hear that, Shane. Truly." She looked at the clock. "Now, our time is up, but I am looking forward to hearing more from you next week."

"Same," Shane said, and was only a little bit surprised to find he meant it.

He left her office and a few moments later, was stepping out into the day. It was then, as the fresh air hit him and the sun reached his eyes, that he realized that he hadn't even brought his baseball cap with to cover his face. And, he was pleased to note, it didn't even bother him.

- - - -

Ilya was sprawled on the couch watching a tennis match when Shane got home, one arm thrown lazily behind his head. But the moment the door clicked shut he shifted, grabbing the remote and muting the TV.

"Hey," Shane said, dropping his keys and wallet in the bowl by the door before pulling off his sweater and hanging it in the closet. A familiar ritual.

Ilya sat up as Shane came closer, giving him his full focus. "How did it go?" he asked. He always asked, and Shane loved him for it.

Shane came over and sank onto the couch beside him. "It was good." He leaned his head back and closed his eyes for a moment as he thought about the session. "Dr. Park said I've shown a lot of growth."

Ilya's face split into a proud grin. "Of course you have." He nudged Shane's knee with his own. "I am proud of you."

A warmth spread through Shane's chest, loosening a knot he hadn't even fully known was there. "She said I'm getting better at integrating my compartments."

Ilya looked confused so Shane continued. "I'm bringing different parts of my life together. That I used to keep separate."

Ilya's grin widened. "It is taking you this long to learn that? I have always been very good at bringing different parts together."

He gave a suggestive thrust of his hips. Shane shoved him, but he was laughing. "Shut up. She said I was doing a really good job."

“No wonder you keep seeing her, you love praise.” Ilya teased, but then his expression softened. He reached out and laced his fingers through Shane’s. “But you are happy, yes?” he asked, his thumb stroking the back of Shane’s hand. “Truly?”

Shane looked down at their joined hands. The twin black bands of their wedding rings. He met Ilya’s gaze. “Yeah, Ilya. I’m really happy.” He hesitated. “Are you? Happy?”

Ilya’s smile was beautiful. “Yes, moya lyubov” he said, his voice suddenly thick. He gave Shane’s hand another squeeze. “Now, I am thinking you deserve a reward for doing such a good job.”

“Okay,” Shane said, sitting up quickly.

Ilya laughed and Shane couldn’t hold back his smile, as much as he tried.

“So eager,” Ilya said. “Go to our bedroom. I want you undressed before I get there.”

Shane bolted up the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

Kudos and comments are like realizing you don't need to hide anymore. An unbelievable joy.

Also if you saw any mistakes please let me know. I try my hardest to catch them all but a few always seem to slip by.

You can also shout about Hollanov with me on [tumblr](#) or [Instagram](#).

See you next Thursday for the final chapter!

Chapter 4: June 2022

Chapter Notes

The final chapter! I hope you enjoy.

Thank you thank you thank you to [shanehollandertwentyfour](#), [theoneiam2277](#) and [canadianwolfbird](#) for all their help in bringing this one together.

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

JUNE 2022

They were in the third period of game seven of the finals.

The score was tied 3-3 and there were three minutes left on the clock. Three minutes standing between them and overtime. Shane did not want to go into overtime. He was fucking exhausted. The whole team was fucking exhausted. Exhausted and injured and desperate, absolutely fucking beyond desperate for a win. To bring the Cup home to Ottawa.

The Vancouver team wanted this badly, but Shane knew he wanted it more. He wanted it more than he had ever wanted anything in his hockey career. More than he wanted to be picked first in the draft. More than he wanted the Rookie of the Year. More than any trophy, award or accolade. This was Ottawa's time to shine. This was *his* time to shine. To show the world that Shane Hollander was not the man who tripped. The player who had let down his team when they needed him most.

No, Shane Hollander was the man who performed under pressure. Who was better than all the rest. Who was at the top, mirrored in skill and ability only by one.

The line was about to swap over when it happened. Shane could hardly believe what he was seeing. It felt like a fucking miracle. The Vancouver defenseman – someone from Finland, Shane could never remember his name – got a penalty for high sticking Haas in the face as they battled for the puck. The Vancouver player skated to the penalty box and Haas skated over to the bench with a bloody mouth. But Shane could see that he was smiling.

Haas knew the opportunity that had emerged for his team. So did Shane. He could feel a matching smile breaking out across his own face.

The crowd knew it as well. They were roaring, screaming, standing, stomping. The sound was echoing off the rafters and across the stadium. Shane felt new energy flow through him as players jumped over the boards and the lines swapped. Ilya was on the ice with him.

It was a fucking powerplay, and they would *own* it.

“Let’s fucking do this!” Ilya yelled as he skated into position. He sounded victorious. Elated. Like he already knew what the outcome of the game would be. “It’s time to end this shit!”

Shane couldn’t stop smiling, even as his heart felt like it was going to beat out of his chest. He watched as the ref skated up to the face-off circle. Shane was tense, but posed and ready, as Ilya bent. Then the puck dropped, the sticks fought, and Ilya had it, and they were all tearing down the ice.

Ilya's eyes met Shane's for a fraction of a second. That's all it took. Shane knew what to do.

His husband went left, drawing the defensive line to him, then spun and fired a backhand pass to Shane. The crowd’s screaming reached a crescendo as the puck slid directly onto the tape of Shane’s stick.

He was behind the defense. He was on a breakaway.

The world narrowed to the ice in front of him. For the briefest moment, for a split second of time, Shane was reminded of the last time he was in a position like his. When the final moment had rested on his shoulders. He could still see himself chasing Ilya down the ice. Could still remember the disasters that had come after that. The trip. The loss. The humiliation. The ostracization from his team.

But that was then. This was now. And he was *Shane fucking Hollander*. He would not make the same mistake again.

Everything fell away. The roaring of the crowd, the players behind him, the exhaustion. There was only the puck, the net, the goalie and the certain, unshakeable knowledge that he would not miss.

He shifted his weight to the right, which the Vancouver goalie immediately mimicked. Then, with confidence born of a lifetime of being the best, he sent a perfect wrist shot just inside the left post.

The lamp lit up. Red. A glorious, blinding red. A second later the buzzer rang. It was over.

Noise, sight, feeling, everything, *everything* came crashing back down on Shane in one overwhelming moment. The crowds were screaming, reaching an impossible volume. His teammates were swarming him. He was slammed into, hugged, shouted at and hugged even more. At some point his gloves were torn away, his helmet pulled off.

He knew he was shouting, but could barely hear himself, could barely feel the push and pull of his team. All he wanted was one person.

All through the celebrations and calamity and chaos, he *searched*.

Ilya found him first. His husband plowed through their teammates to grab Shane’s face in his gloved hands, shouting words that were lost to the roaring sounds surrounding them before crushing their lips together.

The kiss was desperate and wild. Really, it was barely a kiss at all, more of a mashing together of their grinning faces as the Centaurs screamed and yelled and celebrated around them.

They managed to hold each other for a moment more before they were swept apart by their ecstatic team.

Shane couldn't keep the grin off his face. Couldn't keep the tears out of his eyes. They had fucking done it.

They had won.

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It was chaos in the locker room.

Beautiful, insane, absolute chaos. The Cup, *their* Cup, sparkled under the lights.

Shane had seen it before, had won it before, had kissed it and lifted it and drank from it before, but this time felt different. It was a feeling he couldn't shake, a thought itching in the corners of his brain that he couldn't quite understand. Because of course things were different. He was playing on an entirely different team, in a different province, with different players, with his *husband*. But it was something more than that.

His thoughts were derailed as he saw Ilya climb onto a table, holding the Stanley Cup above his head.

The entire team was circled around him, completely drenched, their championship t-shirts plastered to their skin from all the champagne flying through the air.

"We are the fucking champions!" Ilya bellowed, before tilting the Cup to his mouth and drinking deeply from it.

He passed off the trophy to Wyatt, who took it with a grin. Then, with a roar, Ilya grabbed the neckline of his shirt and tore it off as the team cheered.

Shane was smiling so wide his face was hurting. He watched as Ilya threw his arms up in the air, still shouting. The team was laughing around him and Shane thought his heart might burst with the love it held for this man.

It was Bood who noticed the yellowish-purple mark on Ilya's chest first. The distinct mark that circled his nipple. Bood's eyes widened before a shit-eating grin split his face. He pointed, his deep voice cutting through the madness. "*Hollzy!* You beast!"

Heads swiveled, first towards Bood, then to follow the line of his finger. As the team zeroed in on the bite mark on Ilya's skin, a fresh wave of cheers erupted. Whistles and catcalls filled the air.

"Goddamn, Hollander! I didn't know you had it in you," Evan laughed as he threw an arm around Shane's neck.

"Only you, Shane," Troy said, shaking his head in mock disbelief, although the effect was ruined by the grin on his face. "Only you, man."

A hot flush swept across Shane's face but he was surprised to find he wasn't embarrassed. Well, he was a little bit. But mostly he was just... pleased. Pleased to have everyone in the room remember that yes, Ilya Rozanov was *his* husband.

Evan shook a fresh bottle of champagne and sprayed it directly at Ilya. Several of the guys followed in Evan's footsteps, and soon half the team was spraying Ilya down, who just threw his head back as he laughed and preened under the attention. Shane couldn't tear his eyes away. He felt suddenly, overwhelmingly grateful for everything that had happened in his life to bring him to this moment. To Ilya.

Thoroughly drenched, Ilya shook himself vigorously, sending some spray back towards his teammates before he jumped down from the table and strode across the room towards Shane.

And Shane, standing there, soaked and exhausted, with the thrill of victory in his blood and the taste of champagne on his lips, realized something.

This cup, this time, this win, it *was* different. It *was* more meaningful. This *was* more real. Because Shane had no secrets left. There were no longer different sides of him. There were no more layers or half-truth or compartmentalization. The Shane Hollander who had won this cup was truly, fully himself.

And, he realized, he loved it.

He knew he loved his teammates, and that he loved hockey, and that he loved Ilya.

(Always and forever he would love Ilya, the beautiful, brilliant man that he was.)

But he also loved being *out*. He loved loving his husband in a way his friends and teammates could see. That the entire world could see.

His anxiety, his dislike of the spotlight on his private life... it was still *there*. He knew that would never fully go away. But it didn't control his life anymore. *He* was finally controlling *it*. Managing it.

And now here, in the champagne-soaked locker room, with his husband and teammates around him, Shane knew with absolute certainty that things would be different.

That *he* was different.

Ilya was in front of Shane now. Their gazes locked together.

Shane knew what was coming, and smiled. Ilya's hands came up, cupping Shane's face gently. He smelled of sweat, champagne, and pure, unfiltered victory.

"Ty moy chempion." Ilya murmured. *You are my champion.*

Then he pulled Shane in and kissed him.

Cameras flashed, one after the other, immortalizing the moment. It would become *the* photo of the Stanley Cup championships. Ilya Rozanov kissing Shane Hollander as their team went wild around them.

The photo would be everywhere the next day. Websites, social media, magazines, billboards.

It would ignite global conversations. Pundits would debate decorum in sports. People would scream and cry and shout about professional behaviour, and to think of the children.

But more importantly, far more importantly, in bedrooms and locker rooms and living rooms across the world, the image would become a beacon. A lifeline. It would change the lives of young hockey players who were holding their secrets close to their chests, even as it killed them. It would change the lives of the fans who had never seen themselves reflected in the sport they loved. It would change the lives of those who had spent their lives thinking, *this isn't for someone like me*.

It would be shared and shared and reshared with captions that simply read, "This saved my life."

Later, much later, as things got hectic and crazy and wild, Shane would think of Dr. Park's words, spoken softly during an emergency session he desperately called for right as the spotlight was most intense and his life felt like it was spinning out of his control. "*Your life, your love is not a public service, Shane. People may see it, and have opinions on it, but the only thing that truly matters is what it means to you.*"

But right now, in this beautiful, perfect, noisy, glorious moment, he was just a man kissing his husband. This was his. This was *right*.

And he was done pretending otherwise.

Chapter End Notes

Y'all I had so much fun writing this. I hope you had just as much fun reading.

You can also shout about Hollanov with me on [tumblr](#) or [Instagram](#).

I have a Medieval AU where Shane and Ilya are competing knights that I'm going to start releasing next week so if that sounds interesting to you I hope you'll check it out!

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