

Capital Pride

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Capital Pride

by [pucksandpower](#)

Summary

Ilya's spent his whole life hiding. Now he wants to go to Pride — their first as a married couple, in their new city, with their new team.

Shane's spent his whole career being careful, being quiet, being private about everything that matters.

But maybe it's time to stop being so fucking careful.

(or the one where Ilya buys too many flags, the team shows up in matching shirts, and Shane learns what it feels like to be proud.)

The humidity hits Shane the moment he steps out onto the back deck, coffee mug warm in his hand despite the August heat. Inside, Ilya is singing along to something in Russian — badly, enthusiastically, the way he does everything these days. The way he’s been doing everything since they got married, since Shane signed with Ottawa, since their whole fucking lives became this impossible thing Shane still can’t quite believe is real.

“You are going to burn,” Ilya calls from inside, not even looking. Somehow he always knows when Shane’s outside without sunscreen.

“It’s eight in the morning.”

“Sun does not care about time.” The screen door slides open and Ilya emerges, shirtless, holding his own coffee and what Shane now recognizes as the industrial-sized bottle of sunscreen they bought at Costco last week. “Also, we have practice in two hours and I am not listening to you complain about sunburn through bag skate.”

Shane takes the sunscreen because arguing is pointless. Ilya’s already rubbing it into his shoulders before Shane can even open the cap himself.

“You’re very nurturing this morning,” Shane says.

“I am keeping my husband alive. Is different.” But Ilya’s hands are gentle, thorough, spreading sunscreen across Shane’s neck, behind his ears, down his arms. “Also, I need to ask you something.”

“That sounds ominous.”

“Is not ominous.” Ilya moves around to face him, blocking out the sun. His eyes are very blue this morning, the way they get when he’s scheming. “Is fun thing. You like fun.”

“I’m immediately suspicious.”

“Shane.” Ilya’s hands land on his hips, thumbs hooking into the waistband of Shane’s shorts. “Capital Pride is next weekend.”

Shane’s stomach does something complicated. “Okay.”

“I want us to go.”

The deck is suddenly very quiet except for the sound of someone’s lawn mower three houses down. Shane takes a sip of coffee, buying time. “To Pride.”

“Yes, to Pride. In Ottawa. Our city now.” Ilya’s face is open, hopeful, and fuck, Shane knows where this is going. “I have never been to Pride. Not as myself. Not as-” He gestures between them. “As this.”

Shane’s chest tightens. “I know.”

“In Russia, I could not even-” Ilya stops, swallows. “I could not even think about it, you know? Not just illegal, but dangerous. And then in Boston, I was not ready. Was not out. Was hiding everything.” His hands squeeze Shane’s hips. “But now I am here. With you. And I am married to you. And I can—I want to be there. I want to see it.”

“Ilya-”

“You do not want to go.” It’s not a question. Ilya’s face does something complicated, shuttering slightly.

“That’s not what I said.”

“But is what you think.”

Shane sets his coffee down on the deck railing, carefully. “I just—it’s going to be a lot. Media will be there. Everyone will-”

“Everyone already knows we are married,” Ilya interrupts. “We did not hide this. You signed with Ottawa, everyone knows why. Is not secret.”

“I know it’s not a secret.” Shane runs a hand through his hair, frustrated with himself, with how he can’t seem to just be as brave as Ilya makes it look. “I’m just—I’m not good at this stuff. The public thing. The-”

“The being proud of us thing?”

“That’s not fair.”

Ilya’s expression softens. He steps closer, cups Shane’s face in both hands. “Moya lyubov. I am not trying to be unfair. I am trying to-” He pauses, searching for words. “I spent my whole life being afraid. Hiding. Pretending. And now I do not want to do this anymore. I want to go to Pride with my husband. I want to hold your hand in public and not be scared. I want to-” His voice cracks slightly. “I want to exist, okay? As myself. As bisexual man. As married man. As Ilya Rozanov who loves Shane Hollander more than anything.”

Shane’s throat is tight. “Fuck.”

“Is good fuck or bad fuck?”

“Good fuck.” Shane pulls Ilya closer, wraps his arms around him. “Always good fuck when you do the romantic speech thing.”

Ilya laughs against his shoulder. “So you will come?”

“Of course I’ll come, you manipulative asshole.”

“I am not manipulative. I am persuasive. Is different.”

“You’re both.”

“Yes, but you love me anyway.” Ilya pulls back, grinning now, bright and unguarded in the morning sun. “We will have so much fun. I promise. Will be good.”

Shane kisses him because he can't not, because Ilya's right — everyone already knows, there's no point in hiding, and maybe it's time Shane stops being so fucking careful all the time. “Okay. Pride. We'll go.”

“And you will not be grumpy about it?”

“I'm always grumpy.”

“Is true.” Ilya kisses him again, quick and happy. “But I will make you have fun anyway. Is my specialty.”

Training camp is brutal. Coach Wiebe runs them through drills until Shane's legs are screaming and half the team is bent over, gasping for air. It's still preseason, but the intensity is ramping up, everyone trying to prove themselves, especially with all the new faces in the room.

Shane's one of those new faces, technically, even though everyone knows who he is. Even though half the team watched him win three cups with Montreal. It's still different, being here, wearing Ottawa's colors, skating on Ottawa's ice.

Zane Boodram skates up beside him during a water break, grinning. “You good, old man?”

“Fuck off, I'm thirty-one.”

“Exactly. Old.” Zane's twenty-six and annoying about it. “But hey, you're keeping up. Barely.”

“I will end you in bag skate.”

“Big talk from someone who moved cities for dick.”

Shane almost chokes on his water. Across the ice, Ilya is laughing with Troy Barrett and Evan Dykstra, completely unaware that Shane's currently being roasted by their teammate.

“That's not—it wasn't just-”

“Relax, Holly. Everyone thinks it's cute.” Zane's grin widens. “Rival follows his heart to Ottawa. Very romantic. Haysie cried when he heard.”

“Haysie did not cry.”

“I absolutely cried,” Wyatt Hayes calls from ten feet away. “Still might cry again. It's beautiful, what you two have.”

“I hate this team,” Shane mutters.

“No you don’t.” Zane claps him on the shoulder. “You love this team because this team has your husband on it. And because we’re winning the cup this year.”

“Confident.”

“Optimistic. There’s a difference.” Zane skates away, still grinning. “Also, Troy says you guys are going to Pride next weekend. That’s cool. Harris is making the team do a social media thing.”

Shane’s stomach drops. “A what?”

But Zane’s already gone, and Coach is blowing the whistle for the next drill.

“Social media thing?” Shane asks later, in the car, still sweaty from practice. “What social media thing?”

Ilya is driving — he always drives in Ottawa, says it makes him feel Canadian — and doesn’t look guilty at all. “Oh. Yes. Troy mentioned that maybe team should have presence at Pride. Show support. Harris thinks is good idea for team image.”

“Ilya.”

“What? Is good! Team supports their players. Shows Ottawa is inclusive.”

“You planned this.”

“I did not plan this.” Ilya’s hands are very steady on the wheel. “I maybe mentioned to Troy that we were going. And maybe Troy mentioned to Harris. And maybe Harris got excited about visibility and community engagement and-”

“You manipulated the entire team into going to Pride.”

“Is not manipulation!” Ilya protests. “Is—what did I say before? Persuasion. Also, not entire team. Just some guys. Troy and Harris are going anyway. And Dyksie wants to go. And Haysie said something about supporting queer joy.”

“Haysie said that?”

“Haysie reads a lot of Twitter.” Ilya shrugs. “Point is, will be fun. We will not be alone. Will be team thing.”

Shane stares out the window at Ottawa sliding past, the city that’s somehow supposed to be home now. “You really want this.”

“I really want this,” Ilya confirms. “moy pomidor, I have been thinking about this for weeks. Since before you even signed. I want to go to Pride in Ottawa, in our city, with our team, with you. I want to-” He pauses at a red light, turns to look at Shane properly. “I want to celebrate being bisexual. Being queer. Being married to you. I spent so long being ashamed, being scared. I want different now.”

The light turns green. Ilya drives. Shane's chest is doing that thing again, that tight warm thing that Ilya always causes.

"Okay," Shane says quietly. "Then we'll celebrate."

Ilya's smile could power the entire city.

The house is still half-unpacked, boxes stacked in corners, rooms not quite furnished yet. They closed on it two weeks ago, this ridiculous place with too many bedrooms and a backyard and a master bathroom that Ilya keeps calling "decadent."

Shane finds him that evening in what's supposed to be the home office, surrounded by his laptop and approximately fifteen tabs open on his phone.

"What are you doing?"

"Research." Ilya doesn't look up. "Did you know there is whole flag for bisexual? Pink, purple, blue. Is beautiful. I am ordering one."

"Ordering one."

"For the house. And also maybe for Pride. I am seeing people carry flags." He looks up, eyes bright. "Should we bring flag?"

Shane leans against the doorframe. "You're really into this."

"Shane." Ilya sets his phone down, serious now. "You understand what this means to me, yes? Not just Pride, but being able to go. Being able to exist in this space." He gestures vaguely, encompassing everything — Ottawa, Canada, their life. "I grew up being told I was wrong. Bad. Criminal. And now I can—I can be married to you. I can go to Pride. I can have flag." His voice cracks. "Is everything."

Shane crosses the room, pulls Ilya up from the chair, holds him. "I know."

"I am not trying to make you uncomfortable."

"You're not making me uncomfortable. I just—" Shane pulls back, meets Ilya's eyes. "I've never been great at the public thing. You know that. I'm not ashamed of us. I'm just—"

"Private person. I know." Ilya's hands settle on Shane's waist. "But maybe sometimes is good to be little bit public? To show other people that is okay? That we are okay?"

"When did you become the inspirational one in this relationship?"

"I have always been inspirational. You just were too grumpy to notice."

Shane kisses him, soft and slow, there in the half-finished office with moving boxes as witnesses. "We'll get two flags," he says. "Rainbow and pink, purple, blue."

Ilya's smile is incandescent.

Practice the next day is gossip central, apparently.

Shane's barely through the door when Luca Haas skates up, grinning. "Heard you and Rozy are hitting Pride."

"News travels fast."

"Harris sent a team email. Asked who wants to participate in 'community engagement opportunity.'" Luca's grin widens. "Bood replied all with a gif of the pride flag. Dyksie replied all asking about parking. It was chaos."

"Of course it was."

"Troy's very excited," Luca continues. "He's been trying to get the team more involved in community stuff. This is like, perfect for him."

Shane spots Troy across the room, deep in conversation with Ilya, both of them looking at Troy's phone. "What are they planning?"

"Nothing good," Luca says cheerfully. "But probably something well-intentioned."

"We are not wearing matching shirts," Shane says that night, looking at Ilya's phone.

"Why not? Troy and Harris are wearing matching shirts."

"Troy and Harris are twenty-seven and have no shame."

"We also have no shame." Ilya swipes to another image. "Look, this one says 'Love is Love' with rainbow. Very classic."

"Ilya."

"Or this one! 'Be Gay, Do Crimes.'"

"We are not wearing shirts that say 'Do Crimes' to a public event as professional athletes."

"Is funny though."

"It's funny, yes. We're still not wearing them." Shane takes the phone, scrolls through the options. "What about just ... I don't know. Regular clothes?"

Ilya looks personally offended. "Regular clothes to Pride? Shane, no. Is celebration. We must celebrate properly."

"Wearing a rainbow shirt is celebrating properly?"

“Is start.” Ilya takes his phone back, keeps scrolling. “Oh! Look at this one. Has rainbow team logo. We could both wear.”

Shane looks at the shirt — simple, actually, just a colorful centaur across the chest. “That’s not terrible.”

“Is good!”

“I said not terrible, not good.”

“You like it. I can tell.” Ilya is already adding it to cart. “What size are you now? Still medium?”

“Large,” Shane admits. “I’ve been-”

“I know. You have been eating better. I notice.” Ilya’s voice is warm. “You look good, moya lyubov. Healthy.”

Something in Shane’s chest loosens. He moved to Ottawa for Ilya, yes, but also for this — for being able to exist in the same space, for having someone notice when he’s taking care of himself, for building a life together that isn’t just stolen weekends and secret phone calls.

“Order the shirts,” Shane says.

Ilya’s smile is brilliant.

Thursday, three days before Pride, the team has a meeting.

Coach Wiebe stands at the front of the room, looking slightly uncomfortable but determined. “So. Ottawa Capital Pride is this weekend. Several team members are attending.” He nods toward Troy. “Barrett and Harris have organized team participation. This is optional, but encouraged. We want to show support for our community and our players.”

Shane can feel several sets of eyes on him and Ilya.

“The organization has asked if we’d be willing to walk in the parade on Sunday,” Coach continues. “Again, optional. But it would be good visibility.” He clears his throat. “Hollander, Rozanov — you two want to say anything?”

Shane absolutely does not want to say anything.

Ilya, naturally, stands up.

“I want to thank team for support,” Ilya says, his English slightly more accented than usual — it gets that way when he’s emotional. “This is very meaningful to me. To us.” He glances at Shane. “I am from Russia. I could not be open there. Could not be myself. And now I am here, in Ottawa, with this team, and I can be married to Shane. Can be bisexual and not hide. So, thank you. For making this safe.”

The room is very quiet.

Then Wyatt starts clapping, and suddenly everyone is clapping, and Shane's throat is tight and Ilya is sitting back down, face slightly pink, and fuck, Shane loves him so much it's absurd.

"Alright," Coach Wiebe says, looking suspiciously shiny-eyed. "Anyone who wants to walk in the parade, let Harris know. Practice tomorrow is light. Don't do anything stupid this weekend."

Saturday morning, Shane wakes up to Ilya already out of bed, thumping around downstairs.

"What are you doing?" Shane calls, voice rough with sleep.

"Decorating!"

That gets Shane out of bed. He finds Ilya in the living room, hanging the bisexual pride flag — large, vibrant, unmistakable — on the wall above the couch.

"Ilya."

"What? Looks good."

"It's—" Shane pauses. The flag does look good, actually. Bright and bold and unapologetically there. "You're really into this."

"I am really into being bisexual and not hiding it, yes." Ilya steps back, admiring his work. "I also ordered more flags. For outside. They come Monday."

"More flags."

"Is Pride week, Shane. We must show spirit."

"You sound like a high school cheerleader."

"Thank you." Ilya isn't remotely insulted. He turns, wraps his arms around Shane's waist. "You are okay with this? With flag?"

Shane looks at it — the stripes declaring something his husband spent most of his being quiet about. "Yeah," he says, surprising himself with how much he means it. "I'm okay with it."

Ilya kisses him, there in their living room in their house in Ottawa, under one of their flags, and Shane thinks maybe this is what being proud feels like.

Saturday practice is optional but most of the team shows up anyway. Shane's going through stretches when Troy drops down beside him, already loose and annoyingly flexible.

"So, tomorrow," Troy says. "You nervous?"

“Should I be?”

“Nah. It’ll be fun.” Troy pulls his knee to his chest. “Harris is losing his mind though. In a good way. He’s been planning outfits all week.”

Shane smiles despite himself. “You two are good together.”

“We are.” Troy’s voice is soft, happy. “It’s nice, you know? Being able to be public about it. Being on a team that doesn’t give a shit who I’m dating.”

“Yeah.”

“Ottawa’s good for that. The team, the city.” Troy switches legs. “I think it’ll be good for you guys too. Everyone knowing, no one caring. Just existing.”

“Ilya said something similar.”

“Ilya’s smart. Occasionally.” Troy grins. “Also, I saw the flag in your living room yesterday. Looks good.”

“How did you-”

“Instagram story. Ilya posted it.” Troy stands, offers Shane a hand up. “He’s really excited about this. It’s kind of adorable.”

Shane takes the hand, lets Troy pull him to his feet. “He is. Excited.”

“And you’re terrified.”

“I’m not terrified.”

“You’re Shane Hollander. You’re always at least a little terrified of feelings.” Troy claps him on the shoulder. “But you’ll be fine. We’ve got you guys. The whole team.”

That night, Shane finds the Instagram story. It’s just the flag, hanging in their living room, with Ilya’s caption: *First Pride tomorrow* 🌸💜💙 *With my love* ❤️🧡💛💚💙 *Very excited!*

The comments are overwhelming — hundreds of them, supportive and enthusiastic and occasionally inappropriate in ways that make Shane’s face heat.

“You posted the flag,” Shane says, finding Ilya in the kitchen, making dinner.

“Yes. Is beautiful flag. I am proud of it.” Ilya looks up, wooden spoon in hand. “You are upset?”

“No. Just a warning would’ve been nice.”

“Sorry.” Ilya doesn’t sound particularly sorry. “But look at comments. Everyone is so supportive.”

Shane looks. Ilya’s right — the comments are almost universally positive, fans excited, other players chiming in with support, the official Ottawa Centaurs account leaving a heart emoji, courtesy of Harris.

“Okay,” Shane admits. “That’s pretty cool.”

“Is very cool.” Ilya returns to stirring something that smells incredible. “Tomorrow will be even cooler. You will see.”

Sunday morning arrives bright and hot, the kind of August heat that makes everything shimmer.

Shane stands in front of the mirror, wearing his shirt, and tries not to think too hard about what they’re about to do.

“You look good,” Ilya says, appearing behind him, also in his matching shirt. “Very gay.”

“That’s not a look.”

“Is now.” Ilya’s hands settle on Shane’s shoulders. “You are nervous.”

“Little bit.”

“We can stay home if you want.”

Shane meets Ilya’s eyes in the mirror. “Do you want to stay home?”

“No. But I want you to be comfortable more than I want to go to Pride.”

That’s the thing about Ilya — he pushes, yes, but he always means it when he says Shane’s comfort matters more. And that’s exactly why Shane can’t stay home.

“I’m going,” Shane says firmly. “I want to go. I’m just ... adjusting.”

“To being proud gay man at Pride festival?”

“When you say it like that it sounds ridiculous.”

“Is little bit ridiculous. But is also beautiful.” Ilya kisses his temple. “We will go. I will be bi and you will be gay. We will hold hands. We will see many rainbow flags and probably some very interesting outfits. And then we will come home and I will make you dinner and we will watch terrible movie. Will be perfect day.”

Shane turns, cups Ilya’s face. “I love you.”

“I know. Is why you are wearing matching shirt with me.” Ilya grins. “Now come. Troy is driving and he said be ready by ten.”

Troy and Harris pick them up in Troy’s truck, Harris practically vibrating with excitement in the passenger seat.

“You guys look amazing,” Harris says immediately. “The shirts! Are those custom?”

“Ordered online,” Ilya says. “You like?”

“Love. We’re definitely getting photos.” Harris is already pulling out his phone. “Team social media is going to be incredible this week.”

“How many people from the team are coming?” Shane asks as Troy pulls out of their driveway.

“About fifteen,” Troy says. “Some guys are bringing partners. Luca’s bringing his sister. It’s a whole thing.”

“Good thing,” Harris adds. “The organization was really excited when I said the team wanted to participate. Apparently we’re walking with other local sports teams in the parade.”

Shane’s stomach flips. “We’re definitely doing the parade then.”

“Unless you want to sit it out,” Troy offers. “No pressure.”

Shane looks at Ilya, who’s trying very hard to look neutral and failing completely. “We’re doing the parade.”

Ilya’s smile could launch rockets.

Parliament Hill is already packed when they arrive, rainbow flags everywhere, music pumping from speakers, people in various states of costume and undress celebrating in the hot August sun.

“Oh my god,” Ilya breathes, taking it all in. “Shane. Look at this.”

Shane looks. It’s overwhelming — colors everywhere, the energy palpable, people of all ages and presentations and identities just existing, celebrating, being themselves in public without fear.

“Is incredible,” Ilya says, and his voice cracks slightly.

Shane takes his hand, right there in the parking lot, in full view of Troy and Harris and anyone else who might be looking. “Yeah. It is.”

Ilya’s fingers tighten around his.

They find the rest of the team near the Ottawa sign, a cluster of Centaurs players in various Pride gear. Zane is wearing a rainbow cape. Evan has rainbow shoelaces. Wyatt has face paint. It's chaotic and loud and somehow perfect.

"Rozy! Holly!" Zane waves them over. "You made it! Nice shirts."

"Nice cape," Ilya returns, grinning.

"Right? I'm a superhero. My power is being supportive." Zane strikes a pose. "Also, Coach is here somewhere. He's very uncomfortable but trying his best."

Sure enough, Coach Wiebe appears, wearing an Ottawa Centaurs polo and looking like he'd rather be anywhere else but determined to show support anyway.

"Alright," he says when he spots them. "Team's meeting at the staging area in twenty minutes. Stay hydrated. Don't do anything that'll end up on TMZ."

"That's very specific," Troy observes.

"I'm preemptively concerned."

The staging area is chaos — organized chaos, but chaos nonetheless. There are sports teams from across the city, community organizations, political groups, local businesses, all preparing to walk in the parade.

Shane stays close to Ilya, whose head is on a swivel, trying to take everything in at once.

"There are so many people," Ilya says. "And everyone is so—" He gestures, struggling for words. "So free."

"Yeah."

"In Russia, this would—" Ilya stops, swallows hard. "This would not be possible. People would be arrested. Hurt. And here, everyone is just—" His voice breaks.

Shane pulls him close, right there in the staging area with their team around them and hundreds of strangers nearby. "Hey. You okay?"

"Yes. Is just—is a lot." Ilya's arms wrap around him. "Good lot. But lot."

"We can take a break if you need."

"No. I want to do this." Ilya pulls back, wipes his eyes quickly. "I am just very emotional bisexual today. Is allowed at Pride, yes?"

"Definitely allowed at Pride."

Harris appears with water bottles, already sunburned and glowing with happiness. "You guys ready? Parade starts in ten."

Walking in the parade is surreal.

The streets are lined with people, cheering, waving flags, holding signs. The energy is electric. Ahead of them, a group of drag queens on a float are performing to Beyoncé. Behind them, a youth LGBTQ+ organization is chanting something empowering.

And in the middle, the Ottawa Centaurs, walking together, waving to the crowd.

Ilya hasn't let go of Shane's hand since they started walking.

"This is amazing," Ilya keeps saying. "Shane, this is amazing."

It is amazing. The crowd's enthusiasm, the visible joy, the way no one cares that Shane and Ilya are holding hands — that dozens of people are taking photos and it doesn't matter because this is allowed, this is celebrated.

Someone in the crowd screams, "WE LOVE YOU ROZANOV!" and Ilya waves, laughing, delighted.

Another person yells, "HOLLANDER! CONGRATS ON THE MARRIAGE!" and Shane finds himself waving back, smiling despite himself.

"You are having fun," Ilya observes.

"Maybe a little."

"Is okay to have fun, you know. Is point of Pride."

They turn a corner and the crowd gets even louder. Shane spots signs — "LOVE WINS," "BE GAY DO SPORTS," "PROUD OF OUR CENTAURS" — and something in his chest expands.

This is what Ilya meant. This feeling of being visible and safe at the same time. Of celebrating something Shane's spent most of his life being quiet about.

"Thank you for bringing me," Shane says, leaning close so Ilya can hear over the noise.

Ilya's smile is radiant. "Thank you for coming."

After the parade, they end up at the festival area, wandering through vendor booths and community tents, eating overpriced festival food and watching performances on the main stage.

Ilya is drawn to everything — he wants to see every booth, talk to every organization, collect every piece of Pride swag available. Shane trails after him, carrying an increasingly large bag of rainbow merchandise.

"Look," Ilya says, stopping at a booth selling Pride flags. "They have so many."

There are dozens — every identity represented, every color combination imaginable.

“We already have a flag,” Shane reminds him.

“We have one flag. Maybe we need more flags.”

“We definitely don’t need more flags.”

But Ilya is already talking to the vendor, asking questions, pointing at different designs. He ends up buying three more flags — a Progress Pride flag, a trans flag (“for support,” he explains), and another bisexual flag because apparently one isn’t enough.

“You’re going to turn our house into Pride headquarters,” Shane says as they walk away, now carrying even more bags.

“Would be bad thing?”

“Didn’t say it was bad.”

Ilya bumps his shoulder. “You are being very good sport about all of this.”

“It’s not about being a good sport. I’m-” Shane pauses, trying to find the right words. “I’m actually having a really good time.”

“Yes?”

“Yeah. It’s-” Shane looks around at the festival, the people, the celebration. “It’s nice. Being here. With you. With the team. Just being open about it.”

Ilya stops walking, turns to face him fully. “Shane Hollander. Are you telling me you are enjoying being publicly gay at Pride festival?”

“Don’t make it a thing.”

“Is already thing. Very big thing.” Ilya’s eyes are shining. “I am very proud of you.”

“You’re proud of me for existing at Pride?”

“I am proud of you for letting yourself be proud.” Ilya kisses him, quick and sweet, there in the middle of the festival with hundreds of people around. “Is big deal for you. I know this.”

Shane’s throat is tight again. “Yeah. It is.”

“And you are doing it anyway. For me. For us.”

“For us,” Shane confirms.

They find the rest of the team near the main stage, watching a drag performance. Zane is screaming encouragement at the performers. Wyatt is filming on his phone. Even Coach

Wiebe looks marginally less uncomfortable, clapping along with the music.

“There you are!” Troy waves them over. “We thought we lost you to the vendor booths.”

“Ilya bought more flags,” Shane says.

“Of course he did.” Harris grins. “How many now?”

“Four total. Plus some other stuff.” Ilya proudly displays his haul — stickers, pins, a rainbow water bottle, a shirt that says “Bisexual Menace.”

“That shirt is perfect for you,” Evan observes.

“I know. I bought two.”

They watch the drag show together, the whole team clustered together, cheering and laughing and just existing as a unit at Pride. Shane thinks about Montreal, about how different this would have been there, how he never would have felt comfortable doing this with his old team.

But here, in Ottawa, it’s easy. Natural. The team doesn’t care that he’s holding Ilya’s hand, that they’re married, that they’re both visibly, obviously queer. They just care that everyone’s having a good time.

“This is nice,” Shane says to Troy during a lull.

“Yeah. Ottawa’s good like that.” Troy smiles. “Good city. Good team. Good place to be yourself.”

As the afternoon stretches into evening, the festival gets more crowded, the energy ramping up for the evening performances. Shane and Ilya find a quieter spot near the edge of the festival grounds, sitting on the grass, watching the sun start to lower.

“Today was good,” Ilya says, leaning against Shane’s shoulder.

“Today was good,” Shane agrees.

“Thank you for doing this with me.”

“You don’t have to thank me.”

“I want to thank you.” Ilya shifts, looks at Shane properly. “I know it’s not easy for you. Being public like this. But you did it anyway. Means everything to me.”

Shane kisses him, slow and thorough, not caring who sees. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Ilya settles back against him. “Do you think we will come back next year?”

“Definitely.”

“And maybe we will march again?”

“If you want.”

“I want.” Ilya’s fingers trace patterns on Shane’s knee. “I want to do this every year. I want to be old married men at Pride together. Is this okay dream?”

Shane’s chest is so full it might burst. “That’s a perfect dream.”

They sit there as the sun sets over Ottawa, the festival continuing around them, the sounds of celebration and joy filling the evening air. Shane thinks about how far they’ve come — from secret hotel rooms to this, sitting together at Pride, openly married, openly themselves.

“Hey Ilya?” Shane says quietly.

“Yes?”

“I’m proud of us.”

Ilya turns, and his smile is the brightest thing in Ottawa. “Me too, moya lyubov. Me too.”

The next morning, Shane wakes up to Ilya already scrolling through his phone, laughing at something.

“What’s funny?” Shane mumbles, still half-asleep.

“Media coverage from yesterday. We are everywhere.” Ilya shows him the screen — photos of them walking in the parade, holding hands, smiling. Photos of the team together. Headlines about representation in sports, about the Centaurs showing support, about Shane and Ilya attending their first Pride as a married couple.

“Oh god,” Shane groans.

“Is good coverage! Look, this one says we are ‘couple goals.’” Ilya scrolls more. “And this one says we are ‘adorable.’ And this one—oh, this one has many photos of you smiling. You never smile in photos.”

“I was having a good time.”

“Yes, you were.” Ilya sets his phone down, rolls over to face Shane properly. “So. Next year we do this again, yes?”

“Next year we do this again,” Shane confirms.

“And maybe we get even more flags?”

“We have four flags, Ilya. That’s already more flags than any normal person needs.”

“But we are not normal persons. We fought to be here. We need many flags.”

Shane pulls him close, kisses him, morning breath and all. “Fine. More flags.”

“I knew you would see reason.” Ilya’s smile is smug and delighted. “Also, Troy texted. There is team breakfast in one hour. We must go so everyone can talk about how much fun yesterday was.”

“Of course there’s team breakfast.”

“Is team bonding, Shane. Is important.” Ilya climbs out of bed, stretches. “Now come. We must shower smell of sex off for team.”

Team breakfast is at a diner near the practice facility, the kind of place with massive portions and mediocre coffee but good vibes. The team has taken over basically the entire restaurant, spread across multiple tables, loud and chaotic and still buzzing from yesterday.

Shane and Ilya end up squeezed into a booth with Troy, Harris, Zane, and Wyatt, plates of pancakes and eggs piled high, everyone talking over each other.

“Did you see Wyatt’s face paint ran?” Zane is saying. “By the end he looked like a sad rainbow clown.”

“I did not look sad,” Wyatt protests from the next table over. “I looked artistically distressed.”

“You looked like you were melting.”

“It was thirty degrees!”

Harris is showing Troy something on his phone, both of them laughing. “Look at this photo — Coach looks like he’s being held hostage.”

“He kind of was,” Troy says. “But he showed up. That’s what matters.”

Under the table, Ilya’s hand lands on Shane’s thigh.

Shane doesn’t react outwardly, just takes a bite of his pancakes, listening to Wyatt tell some story about a guy he met at the festival. But Ilya’s hand is warm, possessive, and very deliberately sliding higher.

“You okay, Holly?” Zane asks. “You look flushed.”

“Fine,” Shane manages. “Just hot in here.”

Ilya’s hand squeezes, fingers pressing into the muscle of Shane’s inner thigh, and Shane has to fight to keep his expression neutral.

“You should drink water,” Ilya says innocently, his thumb stroking small circles. “Stay hydrated.”

Shane shoots him a look. Ilya's expression is perfectly innocent, angelic even, while his hand continues its slow exploration.

"So what was everyone's favorite part yesterday?" Harris asks the table. "I loved the drag show. Those queens were incredible."

"The energy," Troy says. "Just everyone being so happy. So themselves."

"The vendor booths," Wyatt adds. "I bought so many pins."

"Shane?" Harris prompts. "What about you?"

Ilya's hand has reached dangerous territory now, palm pressed flat against Shane's inner thigh, pinky finger just barely brushing against-

"The parade," Shane says quickly, voice slightly strangled. "Walking with the team was good."

"Very diplomatic answer," Zane observes.

Under the table, Ilya's fingers trace the seam of Shane's jeans, maddeningly light, and Shane's losing his mind. They're in public. With their team. In a family restaurant at ten in the morning, and Ilya is-

Shane puts his own hand under the table, grabs Ilya's wrist, tries to push it away.

Ilya just laces their fingers together instead, pulls Shane's hand to rest on Ilya's own thigh, higher than is remotely appropriate for breakfast.

"What about you, Rozy?" Troy is asking. "Favorite part?"

"Everything," Ilya says, and his voice is lower now, rough in a way that makes Shane's stomach flip. "But especially the ending. Going home with Shane. Was perfect."

Shane's pulse is hammering. Ilya's thigh is hard under his palm, muscle shifting as Ilya adjusts his position, spreading his legs just slightly wider, and—fuck.

"You two are disgustingly in love," Harris says, fond. "It's actually very cute."

"Thank you," Ilya says. His thumb presses against Shane's wrist, feeling his racing pulse, and Ilya's smile goes sharp and satisfied. "Shane makes me very happy."

"I'm going to throw up," Zane announces. "This is too sweet."

But Ilya's hand is back on Shane's thigh, higher now, and there's nothing sweet about the way his fingers are moving, the deliberate pressure, the heat of his palm through denim.

Shane grabs his water glass, drinks half of it in one go. His body is responding in ways that are going to be very obvious very soon if Ilya doesn't stop.

“Moy pomidor,” Ilya murmurs, quiet enough that only Shane can hear under the noise of the restaurant. “You are blushing.”

“You’re being obvious,” Shane mutters back.

“No one notices.” Ilya’s fingers flex. “Everyone is too busy eating pancakes and talking about Pride.”

“Ilya-”

“You want me to stop?” Ilya’s voice is innocent, but his hand decidedly is not.

Shane should say yes. They’re in public. With their team. This is completely inappropriate.

Instead, Shane shifts in his seat, spreading his own legs just slightly, and feels Ilya’s sharp inhale beside him.

“Fuck,” Ilya breathes, so quiet Shane almost doesn’t hear it.

“Thought so,” Shane murmurs.

Ilya’s hand tightens on his thigh, possessive and promising, and Shane knows exactly how this breakfast is going to end.

They make it another fifteen minutes — Ilya’s hand never leaving Shane’s thigh, Shane’s own hand resting dangerously high on Ilya’s leg, both of them participating in conversation while slowly driving each other insane under the table.

Finally, Shane can’t take it anymore. He finishes his coffee, sets down his mug with deliberate precision, and says, “We should go.”

Ilya’s eyes go dark. “Yes. We should go.”

“Already?” Troy asks. “We just got here.”

“Shane is not feeling well,” Ilya lies smoothly. “Too much sun yesterday, I think.”

“You look fine to me,” Zane observes.

Shane knows exactly how he looks — flushed, breathing too fast, pupils definitely blown. “Just need to go home.”

“Take care of my husband,” Ilya adds, standing, already pulling out his wallet to throw cash on the table. “Is important job.”

“Oh my god,” Harris says suddenly, realization dawning on his face. “You two are-”

“Have nice breakfast!” Ilya interrupts, grabbing Shane’s hand and pulling him out of the booth. “We will see you at practice tomorrow!”

They're halfway to the door when the catcalls start.

"USE PROTECTION!" Zane yells.

"STAY HYDRATED!" from Wyatt.

"WE HAVE PRACTICE AT EIGHT AM, DO NOT BE LATE!" That's Coach Wiebe, sounding long-suffering.

"We will not be late!" Ilya calls back, not slowing down.

Troy's laugh follows them out the door. "That's what they all say!"

They barely make it to Ilya's Audi before Ilya is pushing Shane against the passenger door, kissing him hard and hungry, hands already working at Shane's belt.

"Car," Shane gasps between kisses. "We're in a parking lot."

"Is tinted windows." Ilya's fingers pop the button on Shane's jeans. "And I cannot wait until we get home."

"Ilya-

"You were so good in there," Ilya murmurs against Shane's neck, teeth scraping skin. "So quiet while I touched you. So hard for me under the table while our team was right there."

Shane's head thunks back against the car. "You're insane."

"You love it." Ilya pulls back just long enough to unlock the car. "Get in. Back seat."

Shane's brain is offline but his body obeys, climbing into the back of the Audi R8 Spyder while Ilya follows, pulling the door shut behind them. The space is tight, not really designed for this, but neither of them care.

Ilya crowds Shane back against the leather seats, kissing him again, deep and demanding, and Shane opens for him, lets Ilya take control the way they both need.

"All morning," Ilya says, working Shane's jeans down his hips, "watching you at breakfast. Watching you smile and laugh with team. Looking so fucking good in sunlight. I wanted to touch you so badly."

"You were touching me," Shane points out breathlessly.

"Not enough. Never enough." Ilya's hand wraps around Shane through his boxer briefs and Shane's hips jerk involuntarily. "I want to take you apart. Want to make you forget everything except my name."

"Ilya-" It comes out desperate, wrecked, and Ilya smiles against Shane's throat.

“Yes, like that. Say my name like that.”

Ilya pulls Shane’s boxer briefs down just enough to free him, and Shane is already hard, has been hard since the restaurant, and the first stroke of Ilya’s hand makes him gasp.

“Fuck, you are so beautiful,” Ilya murmurs, watching Shane’s face. “So desperate for me. Were you like this in restaurant? Hard for me while trying to eat pancakes?”

“Yes,” Shane admits, past caring about dignity.

“Good.” Ilya’s hand moves in long, slow strokes, building heat and pressure. “I was hard too. So hard, thinking about getting you alone. About doing this to you.”

Shane’s trying to stay quiet but it’s impossible — Ilya knows exactly how to touch him, exactly what pressure and speed will drive him crazy.

“Want to taste you,” Ilya says, and before Shane can process that, Ilya is shifting down, and-

“Ilya, we’re in a parking lot-”

“Do not care.” Ilya’s mouth replaces his hand and Shane’s entire body arcs off the seat.

The heat of Ilya’s mouth is overwhelming, perfect, and Shane’s hand flies to Ilya’s hair, not sure if he’s trying to pull him closer or push him away. Ilya takes him deep, tongue working magic, and Shane is falling apart embarrassingly fast.

“Fuck, Ilya, I can’t—I’m gonna-”

Ilya pulls off just long enough to say, “Then come. Let me taste you.” And then his mouth is back, taking Shane deeper, and Shane is gone.

He comes with a bitten-off shout, hips jerking, Ilya’s name on his lips. Ilya takes everything Shane gives him, swallows, keeps working him through it until Shane is boneless and shaking.

When Ilya finally pulls off, his lips are swollen, his eyes dark with want, and Shane has never seen anything more beautiful.

“Your turn,” Shane says, reaching for Ilya.

But Ilya catches his wrist, pins it against the seat. “Not here. At home. I want you in our bed, want to take my time with you.”

“You just sucked me off in your car.”

“Was appetizer.” Ilya’s smile is filthy. “Main course happens at home.”

The drive back is torture.

Shane is loose-limbed and sated but Ilya is still hard, his jeans pulled tight, one hand on the steering wheel while the other rests on Shane's thigh, fingers drumming with barely contained energy.

"Drive faster," Shane says.

"Cannot get speeding ticket. Coach will kill me."

"Coach is going to kill us anyway for leaving breakfast."

"Is worth it." Ilya squeezes Shane's thigh. "Will be even more worth it when we get home and I can fuck you properly."

Shane's body, which should absolutely be done responding for at least another hour, stirs with interest. "You're going to be the death of me."

"Yes, but you will die very happy."

They hit every red light between the diner and their house. Shane counts them. Seven. Seven increasingly frustrating stops where Ilya's hand gets progressively higher on Shane's thigh and Shane gets progressively more desperate to get home.

"This is karma," Shane says at light number five.

"For what?"

"For you torturing me at breakfast."

"Was not torture. Was foreplay." Ilya's fingers trace patterns on Shane's inner thigh. "And you loved it."

He did. He really, really did.

Finally they pull into their driveway. Ilya barely has the car in park before he's out, rounding to Shane's door, pulling him from the passenger seat.

They stumble to the front door, Ilya pressed against Shane's back, kissing his neck while Shane fumbles with the keys.

"You are taking too long," Ilya complains.

"You're distracting me."

"Is my job. To distract you. To make you crazy." Ilya's teeth scrape the sensitive spot behind Shane's ear. "To make you mine."

Shane finally gets the door open and they practically fall inside. Ilya kicks it shut behind them, spins Shane around, and kisses him hard.

"Upstairs," Ilya says against Shane's mouth. "Bed. Now."

They make it up the stairs, barely. Ilya's hands are everywhere, pulling at Shane's shirt, working his belt open again, touching everywhere he can reach.

Their bedroom is still morning-bright, sunlight streaming through the windows, and Shane is about to suggest they close the blinds when Ilya pushes him onto the bed.

"Leave them," Ilya says, reading his mind. "Want to see you in daylight. Want to see everything."

He strips off his own shirt, then his jeans, and Shane watches, drinking in the sight of his husband — all lean muscle and golden skin and those eyes, fuck, those hazel eyes that are looking at Shane like he's the only thing in the universe that matters.

"You are staring," Ilya observes, crawling onto the bed.

"Can't help it. You're—" Shane gestures vaguely at all of Ilya. "You."

Ilya's smile softens. "And you are you. My Shane. My husband." He settles between Shane's legs, hands sliding up Shane's sides, pushing his shirt up. "Let me take care of you, yes?"

"Yes."

Ilya strips Shane slowly this time, reverent, kissing every new piece of exposed skin. Shane's chest, his ribs, his stomach, his hips. By the time Ilya has him completely naked, Shane is hard again, sensitive and wanting.

"Beautiful," Ilya murmurs, sitting back to look at him. "So beautiful like this. Spread out in our bed, hard for me, trusting me."

"Always trust you," Shane says, voice rough.

"I know." Ilya reaches for the bedside drawer, and pulls out a bottle of lube. "Is honor. Privilege. To be trusted by you."

He opens Shane with careful fingers, taking his time, working him open while Shane writhes and gasps and begs. Ilya knows his body better than anyone, knows exactly where to touch, how much pressure, when to add another finger.

"Please," Shane finally gasps, "Ilya, please, I need—"

"I know what you need." Ilya pulls his fingers free, grabs some lube, slicks himself. "Need me inside you. Need me to make you feel good."

"Yes, fuck, yes—"

Ilya pushes in slowly, so slowly, watching Shane's face the whole time. The stretch is perfect, overwhelming, everything Shane needs, and when Ilya is finally fully seated, they both breathe out together.

"Okay?" Ilya asks, still so careful, always so careful with Shane.

“More than okay. Move, please move.”

Ilya moves, pulling out and pushing back in, setting a rhythm that’s deep and steady and exactly right. Shane wraps his legs around Ilya’s waist, pulls him closer, deeper, and Ilya groans.

“Fuck, Shane, you feel so good. So tight around me. So perfect.”

“Harder,” Shane demands, and Ilya obliges, picking up the pace, driving in deeper.

The angle is perfect, Ilya hitting that spot inside him that makes Shane see stars, and Shane is already close, still sensitive from the car, from this morning, from everything.

“Touch yourself,” Ilya orders, and Shane wraps a hand around himself, matching Ilya’s rhythm.

“Not gonna last,” Shane warns.

“Good. Want to feel you come around me. Want to watch you fall apart.”

Ilya shifts slightly, changes the angle, and suddenly it’s too much — the pressure, the pleasure, the heat of Ilya inside him, above him, surrounding him.

“Ilya-”

“I have you,” Ilya says, and that’s all it takes.

Shane comes with Ilya’s name on his lips, body tensing, pleasure washing through him in waves. Ilya fucks him through it, chasing his own release, and Shane watches — watches Ilya’s face as he gets close, the way his mouth falls open, the way his eyes squeeze shut, the way he says Shane’s name like a prayer when he finally comes.

Ilya collapses onto Shane, careful not to crush him, both of them breathing hard. Shane’s hand comes up automatically, fingers running through Ilya’s hair, gentle and soothing.

“Good?” Ilya murmurs after a moment.

“Very good.”

“Worth leaving breakfast early?”

Shane laughs, the sound loose and happy. “Definitely worth it.”

Ilya lifts his head, smiles at Shane with so much love it makes Shane’s chest ache. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

They stay like that for a while, just breathing together, bodies cooling in the afternoon sun. Eventually Ilya pulls out carefully, gently cleans them both up, then returns to pull Shane

against his chest.

“Best Pride ever,” Ilya says, kissing Shane’s forehead.

“We literally went to one Pride.”

“Still best.” Ilya’s arms tighten around him. “Got to be myself. Got to celebrate being bisexual. Got to hold your hand in public. Got to come home with you and do this. Is perfect.”

Shane thinks about the last forty-eight hours — the parade, the festival, the team’s support, this morning’s breakfast that led to this afternoon’s activities. “Yeah,” he agrees. “It was pretty perfect.”

“Next year will be even better.”

“How could it possibly be better?”

“We will have whole year of being married in Ottawa. Will be even more comfortable. Even more ourselves.” Ilya’s hand traces idle patterns on Shane’s chest. “Maybe we will convince more teammates to come. Maybe we will get bigger flags.”

“We’re not getting bigger flags.”

“We are definitely getting bigger flags.”

Shane laughs, pulls Ilya closer. “Okay. Bigger flags.”

They fall asleep like that, tangled together in their bed in their house in Ottawa, the bisexual pride flag visible on the living room wall downstairs, the afternoon sun warm on their skin, and Shane thinks — yeah. This is home. This is pride. This is everything.

Later that day, Shane’s phone buzzes with a text from Troy.

Troy: *Made it home alive I see*

Shane: *Fuck off*

Troy: *Harris says you guys are cute. I say you’re disgusting. We’re both right*

Shane: *Did you have a point?*

Troy: *Just that I’m glad you guys came yesterday. To Pride. Meant a lot to the team. Meant a lot to see you two so happy*

Shane: *Thanks, man*

Troy: *Also Coach says if you’re late to practice tomorrow he’s making you bag skate until you puke*

Shane: *We won't be late*

Troy: *That's what Rozy said about breakfast*

Shane shows Ilya the texts. Ilya just grins. "We will not be late."

"You sure about that?"

"No." Ilya kisses him, slow and deep. "But is worth risk."

Shane has to agree.

They're not late to practice the next morning. Barely.

The team gives them shit anyway — good-natured chirping about leaving breakfast early, about being newlyweds, about not being able to keep their hands off each other.

Shane takes it all with remarkable grace, only flipping off Zane twice.

But when they're stretching before drills, Luca skates over, expression serious.

"Hey. Wanted to say thanks. For being so open at Pride. For being visible like that." He glances around, making sure no one else is listening. "It matters. Seeing you two just existing. Being happy. It makes it feel possible, you know?"

Shane's throat gets tight. "Yeah. I know."

"Anyway. Just ... thanks." Luca skates away before Shane can respond.

Ilya appears at Shane's elbow. "What did Luca say?"

"That it matters. Us being visible."

Ilya's hand finds Shane's, squeezes once. "It does matter. We matter."

"Yeah," Shane says, looking around at their team, their city, their life. "We do."

And for the first time in his entire career, Shane Hollander feels completely, unapologetically proud.

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