

tucked beneath my muscle memory was you

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tucked beneath my muscle memory was you

by [downtheroadandupthehill](#)

Summary

Still, he's felt like absolute shit for weeks, and the idea of sitting in his hotel room, where he would probably masturbate, cry, and have another night of fitful sleep, did not make him feel any better. Getting to be skin to skin with Ilya Rozanov did. And surely Rozanov wouldn't be demanding Shane *make a nest in his damn bed* if he didn't fully intend on actually kissing him in it and keeping him there until morning, right?

Maybe that would be enough to pick Shane up out of this drop, keep it from happening again.

OR

After not sending the "we didn't kiss" text, Shane's omega hormones go into distress mode. Despite trying to hide his symptoms and play through the misery, when Ilya Rozanov finds out what's going on, the alpha Shane's body wants most is determined to fix it.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

First off in terms of actual timeline + how the hockey season works, this doesn't actually make sense. But this is omegaverse, I can invent whatever I want in terms of timeline for porn reasons, right??? So for the purpose of this fic, please be willing to accept the premise of this AU's NHL awards happening in the middle of the hockey season and that is never otherwise explained in the fic. Thank you <3

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

We didn't even kiss. Seeing the words typed out makes something in Shane's stomach drop. For a second, he worries he'll be sick right there on the floor, waiting for the elevator. The idea of doing so, and being caught there by Ilya, is *mortifying*. Enough for Shane to shake off the sudden wave of nausea and delete the words before he somehow accidentally hits *Send*.

Shane shoves his phone in his pocket and tries to forget about it.

....

But the choice to forget about it is taken out of his hands when Shane sleeps like shit and wakes the next morning in his own hotel room feeling much as he had for those long moments outside of Ilya's, only this time he can't seem to shake it. It's not only the vague nausea that doesn't resolve even when Shane tries to help it along by making himself puke before getting into the shower that morning - it's like he's being hollowed out from the inside from somewhere deeper than his physical organs.

But other than the overall feeling of *emptiness*, it's nothing at all like he's going into heat. At least Shane can be relieved about that.

So he does what he usually does when he doesn't feel well - which isn't often, but elite athletes get sick on occasion like everyone else - he pushes through it.

He's supposed to spend most of the day traveling with the rest of the team, to the extent that he hadn't planned to hit the gym that morning anyway. For once he doesn't regret that even a little.

He doesn't think he can stomach much, so instead of taking his usual jumble of pills with solid breakfast, he swallows them down with an apple juice box from the hotel minibar. It's a carefully formulated combination of omega suppressants intended to address a variety of the typical annoying omega things that Shane needed to avoid dealing with for the sake of his hockey career. Some of the high-end active ingredients in the drugs prevent Shane from going into heat or even preheat until he tapers off of them, which he only does once a year

during the off-season. A few of the others do something to mute his omega scent to practically the point of nonexistence.

Combined with the scent-masking soap and lotion he uses, along with all of the other precautions he's developed over the years - to the vast majority of the NHL and all of the general public - Shane passes as a beta.

It's something Shane's parents have always supported, even encouraged, ever since he presented during his freshman year of high school. Throughout the years his various coaches have been in on it, too, helping Shane hide his designation, advocating in private for him based on his talent, how obviously fucking good he was. His playing has always spoken for itself, for the most part, as long as no one outside of those who absolutely *have* to be are aware he's actually an omega.

Crowell knows, naturally. He and a few other alphas at the top of the corporate ladder were quietly informed before Shane was drafted. While there isn't a *ban* on omegas playing in the NHL, technically - not since the 'alphas-only' regulation was done away with in the eighties - Shane is the first.

It's just not the sort of thing omegas are any good at, goes the conventional wisdom.

Defying conventional wisdom is something Shane used to think he could be proud of. Then he and his parents were invited to meet Crowell for the first time in private at the NHL headquarters. There, Crowell intimated to them more than once that, down the road and however many years from now, if Shane fulfilled his potential as the kind of player everyone was hoping he would turn out to be *and* kept his nose clean, the league might even see the potential advantage to having him 'out' as an omega. One day.

New market opportunities with the changing times and all that, Crowell said, but they didn't want to get too far ahead of the times. Then he clapped Shane on the shoulder, and Shane tried not to think about how that sounded like it might be worse than masking as a beta for the rest of his career and beyond into retirement.

After his shower, Shane can tell something about his scent still seems...off. Subtle, but enough for him to notice. At first, he thinks it might be the smell of *alpha*, somehow still clinging to Shane after several hours and two thorough, scaldingly hot showers.

Because, oh yeah - considering just whose *knot had been buried in his ass* last night - someone else who knows Shane is a secret omega is none other than his biggest rival in the league: Ilya Rozanov.

But no - whatever is off with Shane, it has nothing to do with any traces of Rozanov stuck to his scent, because Shane doesn't smell like the alpha at all anymore, not even a little bit. His scent is entirely his. Just...more bitter than usual. Imperceptible to anyone else, he tells himself, thanks to his meds. Weird and annoying for Shane, sure, but he can ignore it.

He slaps some scent blocker patches on his neck anyway, as he finishes getting dressed, pulling the hood of his sweatshirt up over his head. Even if someone notices them and is impolite enough to ask, it's easy to use his illness as an excuse, since it's not uncommon for

anyone - even betas - to wear scent patches when they want to avoid unusual overstimulation to their senses in close proximity with others. If Shane uses them more than most, it's not enough for anyone to have ever noticed or commented on it.

At the airport and on the flight to Montreal, none of Shane's teammates express curiosity about the patches, if they even see them, though a few ask if he's feeling ok or had a late night. Shane waves off their friendly concern with a minimal amount of words, shrugging. *Not great, but fine. Yeah, late night. Knew I'd be able to catch up on my sleep today.*

The carefully constructed Captain's facade takes more effort from Shane than usual, but he doesn't let his smile falter, keeping his tone perfectly neutral so as to dismiss their worries without making anyone feel dismissed by him, or like he might be *lying*, or *avoiding* anything.

On the plane, in the seat beside Shane, Hayden elbows him in the ribs.

"You look like shit, man. Sheesh. Rough night?" he asks, tone light-hearted. Even though Hayden is smiling, there's uncertainty in his eyes as he takes in just how bad Shane looks this close up.

Shane has been able to keep the rest of the Voyageurs in the dark regarding his omega status, with the exception of Hayden. By Shane's own choice, *thankfully*. He 'came out' to his best friend near the end of their first season on the team together, after talking the decision over with his mom and dad. Being able to trust Hayden alleviated a little of the burden weighing on Shane's shoulders, for one thing, and Shane's parents thought it made strategic sense to have a genuine ally on the team and in the locker room.

He tries to return Hayden's smile now, forcing his face into the approximation of one. "Yeah, I'm fine. Good. Well - I feel like shit, honestly, but it's only because I had too much to drink last night. Hangover, you know?"

Hayden's eyebrows raise. "You?"

"Even I can let loose sometimes." It's close enough to the pattern their conversations tend to flow in on the rare occasion Shane actually *does* drink too much or does anything outside his strait-laced norm. But right now, Shane doesn't think he has the energy to engage in much of their typical banter. "For real, I think I went a little too hard. Could be coming down with something, but I hope it's not that." Hood still up, he leans his head against the plane window and lets his eyes close. Before he tries to catch a few hours of sleep, without really thinking about it or opening his eyes, he asks Hayden, "Is it just me or is this plane weirdly freezing? Beginning to wish I would've brought a jacket."

"No? Feels fine to me."

Shane wraps his arms around himself and sighs before he can stop himself, breath fogging against the plane window.

"Shane...are you sure you're okay?"

Shane swallows heavily and nods. He can practically *feel* the concern radiating off of Hayden. To assure him, he adds, “Could be the flu or something. I’ll have some extra Vitamin C with dinner, stay on top of it. Luckily it’s a few days until our next game, so I’ll be good by then.”

To avoid any further conversation, Shane pretends to sleep, through the remainder of the flight resisting the urge to flag down a flight attendant for a blanket to curl up under in his plane seat.

He doesn’t think it would do much to alleviate the chill settling in under his skin, anyway.

.....

Shane stays shut up in his Montreal apartment for the next few days. The flu excuse is easy, and feels physically similar enough to how cold and tired and *aching* he is in reality that he even convinces himself it’s the truth.

Not that he’s ever felt any ache quite like this before. There’s no cramping, and his body isn’t in *pain* exactly, because he doesn’t really *hurt* anywhere. But at the same time it’s like he hurts *everywhere*, not to an insurmountable degree, but maybe only a few steps removed from that.

He’s too nauseous to eat much unless he forces himself, can’t puke the feeling away even when he forces himself to do that, too.

And *worst* of all, the scant hours of restless sleep he’s able to get over the course of the nights and fitful naps during the days are haunted by a Russian accent and smoky-cinnamon-warm alpha scent.

The dreams Shane usually has of Rozanov leave him hot and flushed all over - as well as sticky between his legs. Now he’s waking up with his eyes red and pillowcase soaked with tears.

When the day of their next game arrives and Shane’s flu is nowhere close to resolving itself, he realizes he has two choices. The first is to show up and play through whatever is ailing him. Wouldn’t be the first time he’s played through illness, probably won’t be the last. Maybe his playing will be embarrassing and terrible and cause the team to lose, but it doesn’t have to be the end of the world, he tells himself. Sometimes people are sick and lose games.

The second option is to tell the team and everyone else that he’s too sick to play, truly take the time to rest and ride it out off the ice. He can *see a doctor* - not just one but two of them, the team doctor and the omega specialist Shane sees at a fancy, discreet clinic on the other side of the city as the need arises. He knows they share his medical file - the team doctor is well-aware of Shane’s status even if he lacks the expertise to deal with it. They’ll find out whatever is wrong with him - maybe they’ll even be able to fix it. He’ll be pulled from however many games it takes until it’s resolved.

His coach and the head of the NHL, at a minimum, will be given access to his full medical assessment, of course, so they can use it to make an informed determination regarding the

rest of Shane's season. Maybe the rest of his career.

As much as he's been trying to avoid acknowledging it, Shane is beginning to suspect he knows what the doctors will determine is wrong with him.

He's Googled his symptoms. *Obviously*. Spent one fraught evening scrolling through WebMd pages and various omega forums, shivering beneath a quilt on his couch.

Rejection sickness. A condition in upset omegas which can encompass the following symptoms: chills, vomiting, loss of appetite, loss of energy, anxiety, depression, mood swings, migraines, etc., typically exhibited by omegas whose experiencing a hormone imbalance, most frequently triggered by the lack and/or loss of an alpha's affection.

Sensitive alpha noses may detect the shift in the omega's pheromones intended to signal distress, thus triggering the alpha's instinct to "reassure and protect."

my boyfriend broke up with me and now my body thinks i'm dying. when does it stop????

Gotta get him back or get over him (or maybe under someone else, but honestly I've heard that doesn't always fix it). Maybe ask your doctor if you can try a different birth control to see if that helps re-balance your hormones? Good luck, give us an update once it resolves!

[The thread ended there.]

And that was only the beginning.

Finally, Shane took a deep breath in, exited out of the several tabs open on his phone, and erased the entire week's worth of search history. He closed his eyes and exhaled, trying to focus on counting out his yoga breathing exercises instead of doing something ridiculous like throwing his phone across the room.

So Shane is pretty sure he has the flu, and he's perfectly capable of playing through it.

.....

When Ilya plays in a western time zone and Shane Hollander is a few hours ahead of him back east, it's his post-game routine, now, to go out of his way to catch the Voyageur highlights on his hotel television. He can get them through his phone, of course, but he prefers to watch his rival in high-definition, on a screen bigger than a few inches, and text him at the same time. Makes it easier to stroke his cock at the same time if the mood strikes him, too.

Not an uncommon mood for Ilya to be in, when it comes to Hollander. Not just since they've been fucking whenever the convenient opportunity arises, but before then. Ilya blames the two of them in the gym, after the draft. Sweat-soaked bodies trembling in the aftermath of another competition, this one even more pointless than usual, between them on the treadmills. Heart pounding, blood pumping. Even drenched in his own sweat and outside the layers of

hockey gear, Hollander's underlying scent was beta crisp with just a trace of artificial spearmint.

Then, watching him pant, Ilya shared his water bottle. As Hollander passed it back to him, Ilya was vaguely aware of his own mouth beginning to water with anticipation he couldn't describe. But then, as he put his mouth where his rival's had just been, gulping down cool, clean gulps of water - Ilya tasted it. The faintest lingering hint of something soft and floral and honey-like against his tongue. It made his cock twitch in his gym shorts as he drained the rest of the metal tumbler in a final swallow, pupils dilated as he refused to break eye contact with the other boy.

It wasn't that he *knew* Hollander was an omega, after that, not until later, though it was when Ilya's initial suspicion developed. Not that anyone's designation mattered all that much to him. More importantly, now that he'd gotten a tease of the other player's underlying, bashful sweetness, it was another chemical like nicotine in Ilya's system, and he had little restraint when it came to indulging himself. The fact that no one else seemed to be capable of detecting it only served to inflame Ilya's alpha instincts, as if Hollander's hidden sweet scent was meant for him alone. The allure of a candy bowl shut away in a cupboard up high, that only Ilya knows about and is tall enough to reach.

It all sort of...escalated from there, as each of them launched into their parallel professional careers. And started fucking when they could.

Word of Montreal's 4-1 loss to New York earlier that evening was already a hot topic in the locker room after Boston's own win. No one got too far into the finer details, but fingers are already being pointed at Hollander, apparently, for his team's unexpected loss at home.

Ilya follows his first impulse, which is to send a shit-talking text.

Ilya

Did I dickmatize you Hollander?

Is that why you play like shit?

Too busy thinking about my knot

Lose to old man in your own city

Loser Hollander doesn't make Ilya's dick as hard as winner Hollander - unless Hollander is being beaten directly at Ilya's hands, that is - but it's a place for Ilya to get started fantasizing as he settles onto his hotel bed, switching on the television with the remote. He doesn't have his cock out yet, though his mind is already drifting in that direction. The fact that he hasn't gotten any response to his texts isn't a deterrent - good boy Hollander is probably sleeping, at this hour in Montreal.

He's envisioning the omega flushed in embarrassment, and pouting at the cameras after a night of shitty hockey. He won't even be surprised if everyone else is wrong and Montreal's loss has nothing to do with Shane's playing at all, the commentariat scapegoating the team's

young star for other people's shitty choices. Ilya is well aware of how *that* can happen when a game snowballs into a catastrophe.

After channel surfing, when he finally comes across some coverage of the Voyageurs' loss, a clip of the post-game press conference, Ilya is in the middle of bringing a cold glass of vodka to his lips. It nearly shatters as he finally lays eyes on his rival - Ilya sets it down just in time before it breaks to pieces in his white-knuckled grip.

Hollander has the complexion of someone who spends all his time in an ice rink to begin with, but tonight all the color has been leached out of his pretty face, with the exception of dark circles around his eyes.

Ilya is seized with the impossible desire to take Hollander into his arms and kiss those circles away.

He curses and regrets being an asshole solely from what he heard about Montreal's loss from his teammates. Guilty about the texts he's already sent, now that Ilya has seen just how *bad* his rival looks.

Even if the omega is sleeping - and Ilya should be hoping he is, really, given how fucking *tired* he looked more than a few hours ago - Ilya sends him another hurried text anyway, thumbs flying across his phone screen.

Ilya

You ok

?

The glass of vodka, Ilya decides, is worth the risk of broken glass from whatever strange current is making his instincts twitch. The alcohol will help settle his nerves - though it's a good thing he ensures the glass is drained and out of his hands as the network launches into clips from the Montreal/New York game. Whatever the opposite of highlights was, for Hollander. Ilya watches, notes the omega's slow reaction time, the choppy and inefficient skating. He also seems to shy away from obvious plays that Ilya doesn't think he's ever seen his rival miss.

In one close-up, beneath the blue helmet, Ilya gets a glimpse of dark slashes of hair stark against a sweat-shiny forehead, beautiful brown eyes strangely unfocused. It's not the kind of glassy-eyed pleasure Ilya likes to see him wear, either.

The cleansing burn of vodka in the back of his throat turns sour.

Ilya

Don't play sick next time, ok?

Get some rest xoxo

His thumbs hover over the screen, more words on the verge of spilling out of him. Texting the omega makes Ilya feel that way more and more, these days, swells of sentiment in imperfect English.

There's no point in trying to stomach any more of this, he thinks, as he turns the TV off and gets up from the bed to see if a cigarette on the balcony will taste any better instead.

.....

Shane has often thought about blocking the alpha's number, but this is the most seriously he's considered actually doing it. But as his thumb hovers over the 'Block' button, he can feel tears gathering at the corners of his eyes, the feeling of yawning emptiness in his chest threatening to swallow him whole.

"Fucking *hormones*." He drops his phone and lets his head fall beside it into his mattress until he's no longer on the verge of tears. For the first time outside one of his yearly heats since he was a teenager, Shane has built a nest in the middle of his bed. It's a pathetic excuse for a nest, the only one he's ever attempted in this specific apartment, full of only his own clothes, his own bitter, unhappy scent. It's not like his heat nests have ever had the privilege of smelling like anyone else, nothing but Shane's neediness, his slick and the hint of plastic, toys to fill the ache. But constructed at least in theory by Shane's instincts to entice and be bred in.

This nest just reeks like acrid misery and the salt of tears. The only whiffs of comfort come from a couple of the t-shirts his mom washed for him the last time he was in Ottawa, still smelling like his parents' house.

(More than once, Shane has been tempted to steal something of Rozanov's after one of their hook-ups for the heat-nest he makes in his bedroom at the cottage each summer. But he's never felt right resorting to thieving from the alpha when deep down he knows that Rozanov would give Shane something of his *if only he asked for it* - albeit with a decent amount of Rozanov's usual smack talk, rubbing Shane's nose in just how pathetic he is.

It would've been worth enduring for Shane to have something in his nest smelling like the alpha now.)

Shane's phone vibrates.

Lily

Text when you wake up

Call ok too

A phone call is absolutely out of the question - however desperate Shane might be to hear his voice, he fears the sound of it will crack something inside of him open, make him do or say something to give himself away.

But Shane knows more than anyone else just how persistent Rozanov can be, so after rubbing his eyes dry, he finally gathers the mental fortitude to compose a reply.

Shane

Think I caught something on the flight back from Vegas

He can't muster any clever banter when it comes to his performance during last night's game. On top of the fatigue and nausea keeping him sluggish, Shane found himself dazed by the flood of alpha pheromones from his fellow players that usually never bothered him, and the presence of any of them in his immediate proximity made him want to bare his teeth, hackles raised, and flee. Despite not losing his composure entirely, it was by far the worst game of Shane's NHL career, and he'd spent almost an hour on the phone with his mom after the game, patiently lying through his teeth to her through just about all of it.

Shane

Doctor says rest, fluid, etc. Nbd. Other than embarrassing.

And because he knows Rozanov will laugh it off, that it comes off via text like this as nothing but an offhand joke, Shane takes the opportunity to send something he *actually* means, because in whatever silly and minuscule way, this is how he can.

Shane

Btw I HATE whoever taught you the word 'dickmatized'

Shane hated how fucking *personal* it felt, like a knife in his heart, when he read over the series of texts he'd originally received from Rozanov in the middle of the night. Like Shane really is just some kind of omega too useless and cockdumb to do anything right, even when it comes to hockey, the one thing he's supposed to be good at.

Lily

Your mother taught me

And you are stupid to play sick

Even golden boy Shane Hollander is human and can have break sometimes

Two weeks to rest up. Then I kick your ass and give you new reason to stay in bed >;-)

Alone in his bed, the anticipation building to when Shane gets to see Rozanov again, no matter how many weeks or months have passed since the last time they've been in each other's orbit - it's the sort of situation that usually has Shane getting wet and reaching down to touch himself, moving shyly though he knows no one is watching.

The desire hasn't completely dissipated, despite his current state. He's conscious of its distant shadow, sometimes, when he imagines his nose tucked into Rozanov's neck, pressed against those big alpha muscles - the rightness of being filled by his knot.

And maybe Shane really is just some stupid omega - *dickmatized*, sure - but he's starting to think his body has the right idea to punish him for craving so badly just what he can't have, thanks to his traitorous heart.

Shane

I'll be better by Boston. Wouldn't miss the chance to beat you in your own backyard.

As long as he can keep contorting himself however poorly through the motions of everything everyone else expects from him, he can fake it through another text exchange if it'll please the alpha he wishes were his, too.

.....

Montreal's next game is in Columbus before they're scheduled to play Boston, but he has a few days of practice on home ice for Shane to try and get his shit together before then.

Granted, more than once he's reconsidered his brilliant strategy of 'just pushing through it' since the most recent game. He's well-aware that at some point it's far worse to humiliate himself on the ice over and over again than to rest for a few games, see a doctor, and face the ramifications of the NHL learning how much Shane's biology is sabotaging his play.

He's just....not quite at that point. Yet.

And he proves it in practice, showing up despite everyone telling him he ought to be resting instead. Nowhere close to his usual level, sure, but he just barely manages at least to hold his own, with his coach and teammates maybe being a little kinder to him than usual, too, even if they're all pretending they're not. And, well, his hard-earned reputation speaks for itself, too. They'd rather have Shane in close to his worst state than not at all.

Whatever comfort that brings Shane is outweighed by the guilt of knowing he's letting them down anyway.

.....

Ilya makes a concerted effort to spend less time texting Hollander for the next few days, imagining the omega curled up in bed, fast asleep and recovering. It helps to quell the occasional pulses of uneasiness he's been feeling, lately, to think about Hollander doing boring things like that. Some vague anxiety that exists mostly in the background until it doesn't and the only way Ilya can will it away again is to think about Shane Hollander taking plenty of naps and drinking down bowls of yucky vegetable soup.

He doesn't push Hollander to answer whether or not he plans to play in Columbus. As much as they like to get under each other's skin when it comes to hockey, Ilya knows all too well how difficult it can be, the careful calibrating between the demands of elite sport versus illness and injury. This isn't a topic he wants to *goad* his rival on.

So despite how oddly cagey Hollander has been about not feeling well, Ilya lets himself feel assured when Hollander mentions the team doctor has cleared him to play in Ohio, attempts

to redirect his focus and the itch under skin to his own game that evening.

And after, in the locker room, surrounded by his teammates celebrating another victory and grinning around his name in their mouths, the first thing Ilya does is turn his phone back on and check the results of the Voyageurs' game.

2-1. Another loss. Not a blowout like the last game, but Columbus was a worse team than New York, and by all logic should've been an easy win.

Ilya

What's wrong? Still sick?

Back in his hotel room, he pours a glass of vodka, and after a long sip, sets it on the bedside table. While he waits for Hollander's response, he taps through his phone for the game's highlights, holding it close to his face and zooming in to stare at the tiny Shane Hollander playing shitty hockey across his screen.

He looks steadier on his skates than a few nights ago. A little more wary rather than dazed, still lethargic and pale, and overall he's managing to be less of a liability to the team but not the asset they're used to, either.

Fuck whatever the Voyageurs' team doctor says, clearing Shane to play. Ilya doesn't know how anyone can look at him, the omega's shoulders slumping and his fierce, competitive gaze gone hollow, and not be able to tell there's something drastically wrong with him.

Jane

Ate something off. Stay away from the seafood in Columbus.

A lie. Without a second thought, Ilya knows Shane isn't being fully honest whatever has been plaguing him.

(Why does Ilya think he's entitled to honesty, anyway? Who exactly does he think he is?)

With a sip of vodka, he fires the next words off before he can stop himself.

Ilya

You play like shit 2 games in a row and make shit excuses too

What will you have to say for yourself when I beat you in Boston

3 losses in a row for the golden boy. what will they say about him now??

And the stream of shit he's talking does its job - the responses ping quickly in his hand, one after the next.

Jane

Fuck you

Sorry some of us actually get sick sometimes

We can't all be giant invincible alphas

You're such a fucking knothed.

Ilya

Call me

He waits, glaring at his phone screen, the low rumble of a growl agitating in the back of his throat. He doesn't know who he's more pissed off at now, himself or Hollander, and Ilya can't figure out *why* he's so pissed at Hollander anyway all of a sudden.

When there's no response forthcoming after approximately thirty seconds, he loses what's left of his patience and hits the Call button himself.

Straight to voicemail.

As he hangs up, swearing, Ilya notices he's clenching his teeth hard enough to ache. It takes him conscious effort to force his jaw to relax, muscle by muscle, over the course of several seconds.

Shit. He fumbles for the lighter he knows is somewhere in his pockets. A cigarette to take the edge off of not knowing what's wrong with Hollander, now even not knowing if Ilya will get to see him in Boston next week, not if the other man is too sick to play and even travel - which *he clearly fucking is*, not that it kept him from this game. Boston remains a question mark.

He finally finds his lighter, and as his chest fills, ready to let out a long, weary sigh of relief, Ilya remembers - he doesn't have any cigarettes. He originally threw them into his duffel bag and then, thinking better of it, left them on the bathroom counter before leaving for the airport.

(Thought about how he'd be seeing Shane in less than a week, how unexpectedly pleased the omega would be to enjoy his scent tobacco-free. His face would crinkle in the way that it did when he let himself smile without thinking instead of the way that it did when he complained about the cigarette smoke in Ilya's scent.

Maybe they'd fuck face to face, and the omega would cling to him to try keeping his nose buried in Ilya's neck.)

Ilya hears the *clatter* of the lighter hitting the wall before he's aware of having thrown it.

He *should* be hoping Shane will go back to Montreal and get the rest he needs, whatever it is that's ailing him.

At the same time, with the prospect dangling over Ilya's head of not only seeing but *smelling* the omega in person - in the flesh, taking in deep lungfuls of his scent and figuring out *what the hell is wrong with him and what Ilya can do to fix it* - Ilya considers his own judgment might be compromised.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry for not even TRYING to half-ass the, uh, actual hockey parts.

Ngl I really wanted this to be a one-shot that I could finish/post before episode 4, but it got a little longer than I wanted (I really hate when I have to set up plot things before the porn, ugh. Like it genuinely pained me that I have to write so much of this setup without them touching each other.)

Does anyone actually want to read any more of this?? Lmao. There's a decent chance this is a bit longer than two parts but there is a genuine resolution I have in sight.

I would also love it if people let me know if there were any lines in this they particularly liked because I'm trying to be less harsh on myself about my writing so I'll be more inclined to do it.

Hit me up on [twitter](#) and scream about omega!Shane and alpha!Ilya with me, I'm begging for HR friends.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Hi, few notes before we start so no one's lost, after the "we didn't even kiss" moment, this doesn't really follow any timeline specific to the book/show, though obviously as the show airs I am becoming so beyond inspired by seeing how they touch and look at each other on screen (aren't we all????). Again, lots of random inconsistencies with stuff in canon/hockey irl because it logistically worked better for my lazy ass (e.g., individual hotel rooms lol), and also I know nothing about hockey and have no intention to learn. Thank you for reading! <3

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

Shane keeps himself together enough to make it to Boston. To *play hockey*. It could be any other city, any other team, for all Shane cares. And if he's anxious and tired and has a swooping feeling of dread in his belly that in particular is now worsening by the hour, it definitely has nothing to do with the prospect of seeing Ilya Rozanov again.

The alpha's shit-talk about Shane's playing in Columbus had hit him right where it hurt, and he was already fuming and on the verge of doing something stupid like texting him back *you're the one who did this to me, you fucking asshole, you ruined me without even trying*.

After receiving the *Call me* text, Shane turned his phone off in a rush, a kneejerk fit of *fuck-you-you're-not-my-alpha* pique.

The last text Rozanov sent him came in the morning when Shane finally turned his phone back on.

Lily

No fun to beat if you are sick. Get better soon.

Shane doesn't bother with a reply.

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On game day, there's a knock on Shane's hotel room before breakfast. As he goes to open the door, he finishes patting his scent blocker patches into place and pulls his hood up, the long ends of his sleeves slipping down to cover his wrists.

Hayden greets him on the other side. "Hey man." Somehow, the two words alone have a timbre of *I'm sorry* about them, and Shane doubts his friend is here to chit chat. "Can I come in?"

No, Shane wishes he could say. But he knows Hayden is only trying to be as discreet as possible - only logical, given what he's likely come to talk about.

"Sure."

Hayden doesn't wait long once the door is closed behind him. "So you feeling any better today?" There's a note of firmness to it now, missing from the more tentative *how are you feeling* he'd been greeting Shane with for the past week.

"I'm good to play."

"You know that doesn't answer my question - "

"Dr. Webster already cleared me." Shane can already hear how defensive he sounds as he cites the Voyageurs' team doctor. "He said there's no reason I'm not fit to play, so - "

"Yeah, and I also know that any other time you see Dr. Webster you end up with a new story for Jackie about just how ignorant he is when it comes to anything related to, you know..." He trails off and gives Shane a '*you know I'm talking about, don't make me the one to say it out loud*' loaded sort of *look* that's too full of concern to be a genuine glare.

Shane looks down at the hotel room carpet - the concern is the most difficult part for him to face head-on - as he tiredly wonders how he can explain himself to Hayden, how little he can give away.

With a deep breath, Hayden forges on.

"And I really hope I'm not being an asshole about it, man - I'm just worried about you. You look horrible. And I'm not gonna say you *stink* like you're miserable, but..." He hesitates again. "The guys are gonna notice something is wrong sooner or later, if whatever is going on with your hormones gets worse. It'll probably take them a while to figure out you're the one causing it, but...something in the air is *off* and I think it's already getting under some of the other alphas' skins."

This startles Shane enough to look Hayden in the eyes again, and he can tell by the expression on his friend's face that it pains him to be having to deliver. "Seriously? They can tell?"

"Not in any specific way, no. Not like, omega-specific - I think your suppressants are keeping it mostly under wraps. But there's still this sense of - I don't know what to call it - and I can tell it's starting to affect some of the guys in a, you know - alpha - kind of way. On edge."

"Jesus. I'm so sorry. I had no idea."

"It's okay for now. Like I said, it's pretty tough to detect, especially if you don't know - "

"That I'm an omega. Right." Shane squeezes his eyes shut and rubs his forehead for a few seconds. One more fucking thing to worry about. And *humiliating*, maybe the most humiliating thing Shane can imagine, other than somehow going into heat during the middle of the game. But even heat cycles were, at least, something fucking *normal* everyone

understood. But a secret omega who was sabotaging his team not only with his indefensible decline in play, but because his haywire hormones were quietly stressing out all of his alpha teammates - the thought makes Shane want to die a little bit inside.

Hayden almost reaches out to pat Shane's shoulder before evidently thinking better of it, retracting his arm instead in a half-aborted motion and shoving both hands in his pockets instead.

Shane tries not to think about how damn fragile he must look, with the way Hayden is looking at him right now, and he swallows the lump rising in his throat.

"Here." Hayden pulls out a scrap of black fabric and the set of his shoulders turns sheepish as he holds it out to Shane. "Look, it's not...you can throw it out when I leave if it's stupid, and it might not really do anything. But Jackie thought it might help if you've been feeling... low."

Shane takes it from him, realizing as he does so that it's a wrinkled linen pocket square lightly suffused with Hayden's alpha pheromones. Not *those* kind - not smelling of even a hint of dominance or desire or the typical shit Shane is used to tuning out being surrounded by a bunch of alpha hockey players who occasionally can't help but flex their scents in the rinks and the clubs. Instead, it's just undiluted alpha *comfort*, earthy and grounding, and a simple reminder of Shane's friend.

Hayden shifts awkwardly, blushing, hands back in his pockets. "It's not...like *that*. Obviously. And I don't want to overstep. But I give these to the kids sometimes, and like I said, it was Jackie's idea."

Shane is more embarrassed by being coddled like one of Hayden's children than by the potential implications Hayden clearly wants to avoid at all costs. But as he rubs the pocket square between his fingers, he has to admit to himself that it does make him feel a little less alone somehow. Gives him another scent to focus on besides his own, still *off*, without agitating his senses. Beneath Hayden's alpha, he can detect traces of Jackie's omega and their kids, too.

If Shane wasn't on the road right now, he'd probably drive to Ottawa, raid the closet of clothes that never got moved out of his parents' house, suffuse himself in their scents and try to feel normal again. Hayden's offering feels a little bit like that, Shane thinks, and with a nod, tucks it into his sleeve.

"Thanks. And if it makes you feel any better, I'm gonna go see my specialist once we get back to Montreal after this game, alright? My mom already booked the appointment."

"Good." At least that seems to relieve some of the concern lining Hayden's brow.

Shane's mom had summarily informed him of the date and time with his omega specialist after the loss against Columbus, before the texts from Rozanov started rolling in. As much as he's dreading it, it wasn't the sort of thing Shane could really talk himself out of, given that the excuses he'd been making to his parents for his shitty playing had switched from a vague 'sick' to a vague 'maybe my suppressants are making my hormones out of whack.' There's

only so much bullshit Shane can ultimately get away with, when it comes to his parents, and it's not like he *wants* to be stuck like this forever. Diagnosis, treatment, and then waiting to see what the league decides to do with him are the logical next steps.

Unless seeing Rozanov during tonight's game - and maybe after, maybe not - can somehow get his hormones under control, Shane distantly hopes. However much the thought of facing him again, and *soon*, just worsens the pit in Shane's belly.

With Hayden, the topic is closed, and Shane ignores the *look* he gets when he spends another breakfast with nothing but a glass of juice to sip on.

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Being in the same space as Shane Hollander again is enough to hit Ilya like a blow to the chest before even laying eyes on him.

The arena is as deafening as ever, being surrounded by a sea of people as oppressive on the senses. It's all part of the background noise that any elite athlete learns to tune out early on in their career, Ilya included. But his nose has always had a particular sensitivity to Hollander's scent after Ilya's very first taste of it, and before they step onto the ice, all Ilya can smell is vinegary unhappiness filling the air - even if no one else seems to.

It's the smell more than the sight of Hollander that makes Ilya's blood run cold - he'd been prepared for that, mostly, from what he'd seen through the screen. He knew to expect the Voyageurs' team captain showing up looking like a shadow of his usual self, face drawn and shoulders slumped, ill with whatever the hell it was Hollander was being so damn weird about, but *fucking hell* - it didn't even occur to Ilya that omegas *could* put out pheromones like this, making his skin itch and fangs ache.

Head bent and talking to his team, weight resting against the boards, Hollander doesn't so much as glance at the Bears, while Ilya just keeps staring, trying and failing to will Hollander to look him in the eye. He doesn't know what for, really, as if there's some assurance the other man can give via eye contact alone to make Ilya's nerves stop screaming.

He grips the hockey stick in his hands hard enough to hurt through his gloves to keep himself from doing something absolutely unhinged, like going over there to drop to his knees in front of the omega and offer to do anything for him, forfeit the game for him, anything to get his scent going honey floral sweet again. The only thing keeping him from acting like one of those rom-com alphas who do something dramatic and borderline humiliating to win their omega back by the end of the movie. Which Ilya, in theory, can actually live with. That sort of public shame doesn't tend to bother him like it does other people.

Even hockey - even *winning* - suddenly doesn't seem as important as fixing whatever is wrong with Shane Hollander.

But as much as his alpha instincts are begging him to do something stupid, Ilya isn't enough of a knothead not to know that intentionally *losing* at hockey, or not bringing his best on purpose, is one of the only things he could do that would upset a proud omega like Hollander even worse.

So he'll try to get his head in the game, and make sure to see Hollander afterwards.

Still, Ilya's voice is uncharacteristically gentle as they meet at center ice.

"Hollander."

The other center keeps his brown puppy eyes downcast, though Ilya thinks he sees his shoulders tense, the throat bob of an anxious swallow. God, all Ilya wants to do is touch him.

"Leave me the fuck alone, Rozanov," he finally says.

A second later, Hollander manages to win the face-off.

The pair of them tend to play better against each other than anyone else, Ilya's noticed over the seasons. *Everyone's* noticed it, and even the stats bear it out. A side effect of the intensity of the Montreal/Boston rivalry and the loathing their two star captains have for one another, is the common, most obvious wisdom.

A year or so ago, Ilya started to privately speculate if it might be their compatible biology, literally improving their physical speed, awareness, reaction time. Something in their bodies following the logic of showing themselves off for a preferred mate, in a way that strangely benefited their hockey rather than the opposite.

(It didn't help that Ilya had started thinking of their games as a sort of foreplay, battling for supremacy on the ice as a prelude to taking each other apart later that night.

Based on the fierce grins he occasionally spies on Hollander's face during their games, at least, Ilya suspects the feeling goes both ways.)

Tonight, however, biology is against them. Ilya doesn't feel physically ill, exactly, but he can hardly keep track of what's going on around him other than Hollander's presence on the ice. Where he is in relation to the other players, in particular. Every time another alpha gets within a foot of the Voyageurs' center - which is often, despite Hollander clearly trying to stay out of the thick of the things and avoid any direct conflict - Ilya's jaw clenches so hard he thinks his mouth guard will be chewed through before the end of the game. More than once he considers how satisfying it would feel to whack one of his own teammates with the stick already threatening to crack in his hands anyway.

No one else on either team seems to notice the scent of miserable omega among them for the duration of the game other than Ilya, luckily for Hollander. But although no one else is attuned to Hollander's scent like Ilya, or can detect it through his suppressants, Ilya starts to realize it's impacting them anyway. Everyone's teeth are a little more on edge, even the refs, with Ilya's teammates even further frustrated by their own captain suddenly playing as terribly as they've ever seen him during what ought to be an easy game against their handicapped rival - though Ilya couldn't really give less of a fuck about that right now.

Despite his earnest effort to focus on the game, Ilya's distraction is undoubtedly why Montreal ends up beating Boston by a narrow victory of 2-1. What it boils down to, in the

end, is the Voyageurs were expecting their star center to play like shit and did their best to work around that weakness accordingly - and the Bears were not.

Luckily, no one seems to have picked up on what was really underlying the overall shitshow of a game, no suggestion from anyone that hormones or secondary genders had anything to do with it. Instead, within hours, people online speculate about dueling hexes from Etsy witches paid for by fans desperate to curse their faves's rival. Could be worse, all things considered.

Ilya's coach and the rest of his team are in his ears in the locker room afterwards, but he tunes them out, for the most part, other than some nods and grunts and oblique excuses about maybe catching sick or maybe having eaten something off. If Hollander can get away with it for multiple games, then so can Ilya at least for one. Unlike Hollander, Ilya uses his sudden onset of illness as an excuse to skip the post-game media racket, heading straight home and wracking his brain as to what the fuck he can do now.

Driving home at a steady fifteen over the speed limit and white-knuckling the steering wheel, Ilya recalls what little he knows about omega rejection sickness, or 'dropping.' He's never been taught about it in any formal sense, though he's familiar with the general concept. It's the kind of thing some alphas will make shitty little jokes about that Ilya knows aren't funny at all, knows whoever is making them is the worst type of knothead alpha stereotype.

A few minutes of Googling when he gets home all but confirm Ilya's suspicions, based on what he can tell of Hollander's symptoms, and leaving the omega alone doesn't seem like something Ilya is capable of doing even if he wanted to, despite Hollander's own stated demand at center ice. The unpleasant *need* since picking up Hollander's scent in the arena still crawls beneath his skin, soothed only a little as Ilya hurriedly prepares his space so that he can try to fucking fix this.

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Shane feels more hollowed-out than ever when he finally gets back to his hotel room after the usual post-game wrap-up. He can't even enjoy the relief of having not lost a third game straight, the Voyageurs' unexpected victory, Rozanov playing the worst Shane has probably ever seen him - which Shane knows is his fault, too, somehow.

All Shane wanted to do was fall to his knees at the first lungful of Rozanov's smoky alpha pine scent to his system. It made him want to *cry*, too, and before the game started, it was all Shane could do to hold himself upright and blink back the pressure building behind his eyes. Sheer force of will got him through the game, barely holding it together.

He tried not to panic when Rozanov disappeared after the game.

Shane is in the middle of formulating a reply to a message from his mother about how they're definitely keeping the appointment she scheduled with the omega specialist when a text from Rozanov finally comes in.

Lily

Your playing has been shit for days because of me

With an annoyed snort, Shane waits for the inevitable taunting to start and abandons even pretending to attempt to reply to his mom. His grip on the phone tightens as it vibrates with subsequent follow-up messages.

Lily

I'm sorry

My fault you are sick

Will not happen again, I promise

Not the sentiment Shane was bracing himself for, the words manage to hit him in his unguarded underbelly, make his breath catch for a moment. *Fuck off*, he's on the verge of typing, a kneejerk-like last line of defense; just because Rozanov's words are softer than he could've hoped for, after the shitshow out there, doesn't mean he needs to let them work on him.

Because Rozanov doesn't know what he's promising, does he? It's impossible to promise he'll never make Shane feel like this again, because even Shane doesn't fully understand why his body is responding this way or what Rozanov did *wrong*. If he doesn't know what Rozanov is specifically apologizing for, does Rozanov? Or is he throwing a band-aid at Shane out of some guilt born from nothing but instinct?

No one expects to be kissed and cuddled by someone who happens to be a convenient fuck. Just because Shane is an omega doesn't mean his body is supposed to be so fucking stupid about it. Figures, he finally finds something that feels good outside of hockey and now he's fucking that up too, with his stupid hormones.

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You deserve better, Ilya types out, then deletes. It doesn't matter if it's the truth - he can't stand the thought of Hollander finding whoever 'better' might be.

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Lily

Let me make it up to you

With my mouth

And my cock

And my knot

He drops his phone like it's on fire. Shane's face definitely feels like it's on fire, and it's difficult to ignore it's the warmest he's felt in weeks - other than maybe hearing his last name

in Rozanov's voice, just before Shane won their face-off.

Despite *knowing* he knows better, Shane is...tempted. But now that he knows he's definitely not going to be able to just fuck Ilya Rozanov out of his system, he's not sure how to justify continuing to do this to himself. He's felt awful for over two weeks now, ever since walking out of Rozanov's hotel room in Vegas, well-fucked but chest aching.

Clearly his body thinks it knows what will fix it. Shane finds himself craving the alpha's scent like oxygen.

Still...Shane arrived in Boston of two minds: maybe he could see Rozanov alone again, they could touch each other, Shane could see if that would be enough to fill the gaping hole in his chest - or maybe he could try resolving his sickness by telling Rozanov to go fuck himself and really, *really* meaning it. Cutting off the terrifying thing developing between them and committing to it. Closure, maybe. Some of the omegas on the forums Shane read said it had worked for them.

Then Rozanov sends him a photo. It's clearly his bedroom, based on the details Shane can usually only see in the background of an occasional selfie or dick pic. An unmade bed with navy sheets takes up most of the screen, and on it - a pile of clothes. Mostly athletic wear in basic gray and black, several different splashes of both Boston and Russian red, a few rumpled white dress shirts.

On one side of the image, just within frame, Shane spies half of an empty laundry basket. With almost visceral clarity, he imagines Rozanov desperately upturning the contents onto his own bed.

Lily

You are sick, nest will help

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After a few minutes of staring at his own blinking cursor with no response, Ilya decides to be more obvious about it. Just in case, since he's never done anything quite like this before with anyone and he doubts Shane Hollander has, either.

Ilya

Please come nest in my bed

I want to see what you look like here

Make all of my clothes and sheets smell like you

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Shane's most intimate fantasies have never been this indulgent, but *God*, now that he has the idea in his head, it's going to drive him crazy. Thinking about getting to sprawl in Rozanov's things, luxuriating in the alpha's scent and knowing that he's getting to leave his own all over

them, too. And not just Rozanov's clothes - his bed, where he must sleep and jerk off and fuck more than he does anywhere else. Maybe whoever Rozanov brings back there next time will still be able to smell whatever traces of Shane still linger there - a thought that would almost make Shane smug if it didn't also make him want to yell and throw something.

But what if what Shane needs isn't to get fucked down again by the alpha who drove him off this miserable cliff to begin with, but instead to of his own volition say *fuck you Rozanov*, finally block his number, and never meet him outside the rink ever again?

Still, he's felt like absolute shit for days, and the idea of sitting in his hotel room, where he would probably masturbate, cry, and have another night of fitful sleep, did not make Shane feel any better. The idea of getting to be skin to skin with Ilya Rozanov did. And surely Rozanov wouldn't be demanding Shane make a nest in his damn bed if he didn't fully intend on *kissing* him in it and keeping him there until morning, right?

Maybe that would be enough to pick Shane up out of this drop, keep it from happening again, at least this time. Committing to cutting himself off could come later, after his hormones maybe finally got some relief.

Shane

Ok fine

The phone rings, and Shane's belly swoops as he forces himself to hit the answer button.

"I pick you up. Twenty minutes."

"What? No, *no*, I'll get a cab, just text me your address - "

"I am in car already. Pick you up from hotel."

Shane can feel his face heating up again. Flustered at the urgency and the sound of Rozanov in his ear, he scrubs a hand through his hair, wets his lower lip, and nods.

"Hollander?" There's an edge to the alpha's voice when he doesn't hear Shane respond.

"*Shit* - I mean, yeah. Yes. Fine." Shane exhales. The words are out, and for better or worse, he's going to be spending the night at Ilya Rozanov's place. *Probably*. Hopefully? (Shane tells himself to stop *being fucking ridiculous*, no way Rozanov would be going through all this trouble just to kick him out after a few hours.) "Just - we need to make sure no one sees us."

"Is okay. I call you, I circle block a few times, you come out, I pick you up. No one will see. Okay?"

"Yeah, okay. I guess I'll, uh..." Blinking, he scans the hotel room and tries to think.

"Pack bag. Toothbrush, pills, whatever. Call you back in eighteen minutes, okay?"

Because Shane realizes by now that Rozanov isn't just issuing him orders, like an entitled knothead alpha expecting to be obeyed, he doesn't forget to agree out loud again. "Okay."

"See you soon, Hollander."

Shane stands there for longer than he should, after the call ends. Frozen, for maybe half a minute, prey caught between instincts to fight or to flee. (Or maybe, instead of to fight, *to fuck*, or - knowing he and Rozanov together - to fight and then fuck and fight again.) Two warring tugs at his biology: part of him wanting to *run the fuck away* and hide forever from the alpha who'd made him feel so terrible for weeks, and the other part just *wanting* the alpha's skin against his so badly he can almost taste it. Would maybe spend several more weeks wallowing in misery just to taste it again.

On top of that, his fucked-up hormones are all tangled up with what his heart wants but is terrified of not getting to have and his brain knows is stupid to want in the first place.

But *fuck* - he gets to nest in Ilya Rozanov's actual bed.

He quickly packs a bag and waits for his phone to ring again.

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Getting back into close proximity with Hollander is like a boulder off of Ilya's chest. As the omega slides into his passenger seat, Ilya has to fight to keep both hands on the steering wheel instead of reaching out to rub one of his wrists against Hollander's. Though Ilya is dying to alleviate the omega's unhappy pheromones, he knows the gesture would be weirdly presumptuous and proprietary, given the circumstances.

"Hey."

"Hollander."

With the other man's hood pulled up, Ilya isn't able to read his face and drive at the same time, and for one of the rare times in his life with anyone who isn't his father, Ilya is *petrified* of saying the wrong thing. He hadn't thought much beyond getting to this point, once he'd set upon the course of convincing Hollander to come build a nest in his bed, and getting him here *with him*, nowhere for either of them to run. In eyesight, in arm's reach, and all of the hockey bullshit left back on the ice, no one to keep secrets from except for each other.

Except the silence between them now is too brittle to put any trust in. Hollander's head tilts against the window, and Ilya regrets not knowing what type of music he likes but also knows now isn't the time to ask.

It's only been a few tense minutes when Ilya's nose filters to his brain that, beyond Hollander's distressed omega scent, there are notes of another alpha. And it's just plain *irritating*, on a primal level, despite Ilya usually being above such instincts. Hollander smells distracting enough without the stench of strange alpha on top of it, grating at Ilya's patience. He knows the other player obviously showered after the game - there's no sweat or ice rink or two entire hockey teams of alphas clinging to his scent. Just one annoying fucking alpha.

Ilya grits his teeth. At the next red stoplight, he shrugs out of his black leather jacket and drapes it over Shane's shoulders, attempts a half-apologetic crooked smile.

"You're cold," he says, and judging how Shane's arms are folded around himself, it's not like he's lying. Still, Ilya doesn't quite expect the abrupt shift in pheromones which occurs as the jacket settles into place, as some of the anxiety in the air dissipates.

The light turns green, and Ilya can't tell for sure whether or not there is any shift in Shane's expression to match the uptick in his scent, but then, without any further acknowledgement, the omega slips his arms through the sleeves.

Ilya nearly purrs in satisfaction.

"I don't want to hear any shit talk tonight about my playing," Shane finally says. "Not when you might've been even worse."

"I don't give a fuck about the game, Hollander." Ilya fingers drum against the steering wheel. He Baby deer brown eyes reflect in the car window, and Ilya wishes he could properly tell whether they're shining with tears or if it's just a visual effect of the streetlights. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine."

Ilya smothers his scoff, doesn't bother to tell him he can smell the lie. "You were distracting."

"Whatever," Shane mumbles. Still, he draws Ilya's coat a little closer around him.

Again, Ilya resists the urge to reach out and touch him. A hand on his knee, maybe. He imagines their fingers wound together.

Gnawing at his insides, Ilya's inner alpha tells him he's not allowed to yet, that he hasn't earned back the right.

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It's all Shane can do to resist burying his nose in the collar of Rozanov's jacket, the warm and woodsy alpha musk a blanket he could practically curl up in, if only he could so without imploding from embarrassment.

The car pulls into what must be Rozanov's driveway. Shane gets out, holds out a hand to steady himself against the hood of the car and squints into the darkness at the front of Rozanov's house.

Out of nowhere, he finds flexing alpha biceps caging him against the car's sleek steel exterior, just close enough to keep him there without quite touching. Still, Shane almost finds himself swaying forward to lean into Rozanov's chest suddenly inches from his own. But Rozanov just about beats him to it, neck bending forward as he rests his forehead on Shane's shoulder, and long fingers curl into the pockets of the leather jacket he's still wearing.

“I’m sorry, Shane,” Rozanov breathes out harshly through his nose. “I could handle, in the car. But is very hard, right now, to let you into my house. Not when your scent - when your smell is -”

All but pressed against the sports car, Shane wishes he had the space he could recoil in abject humiliation. “Look, fuck you, man. You knew I smelled like this when you fucking *invited* me here, so - “

Rozanov interrupts him with a loud intake of breath, and corded muscles tighten in the forearms bracketing Shane’s hips.

“Not *you*. I’m sorry, Hollander. Is...” The head on Shane’s shoulder gets a bit heavier. “The smell of other alpha on you. Is going to drive me crazy.”

And - *fuck*, even though that admission threatens to have Shane baring his neck with a whimper, when it actually occurs to him what must be triggering Rozanov’s senses, he’s unable to suppress an abrupt peal of laughter instead.

“Am I so funny to you?” Shane thinks he can detect a smile in the corners of the other man’s voice.

In answer, Shane proffers one arm. Ilya’s hands are hot on the back of his hand, his wrist, as he reaches under the layers of sleeve and tugs free a folded black linen pocket square.

Rozanov glares at it in the half light.

“It’s *Hayden’s*,” Shane informs him, laughing again when that explanation gets Rozanov really scowling. “Are you serious?”

“Serious what? You think I let pretty omega in my house smelling like strange alpha? Like *Hayden Pike* alpha? No, no.” He crumples the pocket square in his fist and turns on his heel.

Relaxed as he feels in the leather jacket, Shane makes a mental note that he owes Hayden a new pocket square and doesn’t bother protesting as he follows Ilya into his home.

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“Tour tomorrow, nest now,” Ilya says, turning on the bare minimum of dimmable overhead lighting as he leads Shane straight to the bedroom. Getting Hayden’s scent off of the omega had eased some of the tension from Ilya’s shoulders, but something deep down is telling him that neither of them can rest until they’re drenched in each other’s scents - though it’s not quite lust that drives him, either. Not only that, but Ilya meant what he said, in the texts he sent - his need to see Shane Hollander laid out and nesting in his bed goes further than gut-deep.

Ilya turns on the lamp by his bedside, then retreats to the doorway several respectful steps back. He’s been in a few heat nests over the years, but never before has he asked an omega to build a nest in his own home, his own bed. He wonders if there is any etiquette to dictate that

it would be rude for him to stand there and watch...but he'll stay as long as Shane doesn't ask him to leave.

Shane stands at the foot of the bed, eyes wide and lips parted, looking smaller than he usually does thanks to Ilya's jacket, oversized on his frame. One hand is already outstretched, rubbing the sleeve of a sweatshirt emblazoned in Cyrillic and the Olympic rings between his thumb and forefinger.

He shoots Ilya a bashful glance over his shoulder, and Ilya has to remind himself it would probably be a bad idea to stride forward and bend the other man over the edge of his bed.

"Can I really...?" Shane hesitates.

"Yes. Is for you. Unless, hm, you want to sleep? Eat something? How are you feeling?"

Shane's other hand joins the first, fingers flexing in gray fleece. "No, no - this is good. I can - I want - to make a nest here."

Ilya nods instead of trusting himself to speak.

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The air here is so thick with Ilya's campfire pine scent that Shane can practically taste it. He hardly knows where to begin, drinking in the sight of the bed in front of him, piled with an assortment of clean and dirty clothes which Shane's hands are already twitching to move here and there. He touches before he can think better of it or pause to ask permission, but Ilya's further encouragement is all the prodding Shane needs to clamber on his knees onto the bed.

Doing his best to ignore the heat of Ilya's gaze like a brand at the small of his back, Shane starts by shucking off the jacket and laying it out in the center of the bed. When that doesn't provoke any protest, he lets out a soft hum and strips out of his hoodie and sweatpants, neatly folding them to tuck into one far corner of the beginnings of his nest.

Down to his t-shirt and boxers, the backs of Shane's arms and thighs prickly with an awareness he chooses to disregard as he tries not to worry about looking fussy or ridiculous. The pull to nest has never felt quite like *this* before, he thinks, leaning back on his haunches. Settling into his task gives him more energy than he's had in weeks.

If the omega instinct in the back of his mind purrs happily at satisfying the basic urge to build a nest *for his alpha in his alpha's bed*, that's one more thing Shane can let fade into the background for now.

.....

Ilya preens as some of Shane's unhappy scent begins to dissipate, or maybe it just winds up so diluted by his own alpha scent that it seems to fade somewhat - either way, he'll consider it a victory.

Shane spreads the upturned heap of laundry across the mattress, begins the process of weaving items into the sheets. He pauses to sniff things here and there before he places them,

sometimes taking the chance to scent them, too, swiping more than one waistband or collar against his wrists and neck, often accompanied with surreptitious glances at Ilya over his shoulder. It's *adorable*, honestly, as well as somehow kind of erotic in a way Ilya had never really considered before now, before Shane.

Of course Ilya's alpha instinct is smug, watching.

"Are these all the pillows you have?" Shane asks, hands smoothing over the three pillows already at the head of Ilya's bed.

"Pillow princess."

"Fuck you."

Their voices are back to something resembling the usual tone of their banter.

"Can I leave you here for moment? I get pillows for his highness." Ilya gestures into the hallway.

"Yeah, that's fine, please."

Ilya leaves Shane alone for as short a time as possible, grabbing pillows off of the bed from a guest room and quickly returning to his own.

"Thanks." Shane takes the armful of pillows, fluffs them into place on top of the others already there.

"Anything else? I forget to ask earlier, if you are hungry. Do you want to eat something?"

"Not now, 'm fine," Shane mutters absently, and Ilya wants to roll his eyes and tell him to stop saying that all the time, but the room smells enough like content omega now that he'll hold his tongue. Shane straightens the remaining articles of clothing he's used to line the sides of the mattress and then scoots back to its center.

Then, with a loud sigh and arms outstretched, Shane flops onto his back. It startles a laugh out of Ilya, and from here he thinks he can see a faint smile making its way onto Shane's face, too.

"Shut up." Shane closes his eyes and leans back on the mound of pillows, shifts a little from side to side. "You honestly have no idea how good this is, I'm so serious."

Thanks to the sight of Shane sprawled out in his bed and the contents of the most-worn half of Ilya's closet, scent going mellow and sweet again, Ilya thinks he has *some* idea. But he doesn't take the verbal bait Shane has left dangling.

"Are you really just gonna stand there? It's kind of creepy."

"I may be a knothed, Hollander, but I was not born in barn." He rocks back on his heels. "I will not enter nest without invitation."

Ever since his presentation, Ilya has rarely struggled to navigate his alpha instincts. He knows when to follow them to something he wants, how to lean into them to get. Just an edge of alpha aggression out the ice, the thrill of the fight, showing the rest of the world that he's on top. But he knows how to rein in his instincts, too. Controlling them instead of letting them control him. He knows how to get into just the right amount of trouble to have a lot of fun, low stakes.

And on top of that, Ilya is aware that he's defied his traditional upbringing - as hard as his father had worked to turn him into one of those obvious kind of alphas who treat the rest of the world like their playground and omegas their particular playthings, none of it really took root in him. He might be a smart-mouthed asshole most of the time who enjoys baiting the hell out of people as well as take plenty of sexual satisfaction in his natural alpha dominance, but he's never thought his designation makes him above anyone else. And with omegas, he's always extra careful with matters of consent - which includes knowing better than to trespass on a nest.

Though it *tests* him, when Shane Hollander looks up at Ilya from under those lovely long eyelashes like he was born to be ravished and murmurs: "It's your bed."

"And the nest in it belongs to you." Ilya lets himself be smug about it, assuaging his greedy alpha instincts in the meantime. "I will wait for you to ask."

Hollander's gaze goes downcast and his pretty lips purse. He resumes fussing with the placement of a worn t-shirt under one arm, and the buzzy omega pheromones around them begin to dip. "Why am I here, Rozanov?"

"What? Because I want you here!" He can't sound as gentle as he would like to when his nerves are screaming out to him to just fucking *go* to the omega. He takes a few steps closer to stand just at the foot of the bed, arms out in a placating gesture. "I wanted to see what you would look like here, spread out in my bed and rubbing yourself so prettily all over my things." Slowly, Ilya reaches out to rest a hand on one socked ankle. When he feels Hollander's tendons twitching in response, he traces circles over the bone with his thumb. "You don't think I want? But I am gentleman, Hollander. Trying to be. Though you make it very hard." He gives Hollander's ankle one last squeeze before letting go.

And it's not what Ilya was deliberately aiming for, but there it is anyway, the faintest waft of honeyed arousal in the air, making his nostrils flare.

Hollander flushes and squirms and for a moment all the sight does is make Ilya wonder if his hole is getting wet already. Still, the omega rolls his eyes and lets out an annoyed huff. "Will you just get into my fucking nest then, alpha, please?"

"Mmmm." With the pleasing beginnings of a rumble in his chest, Ilya hurriedly strips out of everything other than his t-shirt and boxers and all but bounds into the bed. He's done tiptoeing around this unless Hollander tells him to back off - Ilya drapes himself along his back, arms coming up to wrap around Hollander from behind so their bodies fit together. It feels like letting out a breath he didn't know he was holding.

“Is first time you have called me alpha,” he purrs into his ear and kisses just below it. This close up, he can smell the latent misery still under Hollander’s skin, and all Ilya can think about is driving it away.

“I didn’t say it like *that*.”

“Doesn’t matter. Is sexy no matter how you say it.” Another few kisses, these to specific freckles on the back of Hollander’s neck, and Ilya hopes he isn’t imagining the omega melting further into his arms. “Is very good nest, too. Nice and cozy.”

”Baddest alpha in the league is calling my nest *cozy*? Wow, never would’ve guessed you’re such a secret softie.”

“Your fault.” Ilya nuzzles the top of his head.

.....

The minutes of silence between them are comfortable, but Shane can feel the awkward tension start to seep back in, at least on his end. The weight of everything still going unsaid between them makes his chest hurt when he makes the mistake of remembering it.

“How are you feeling? Did no one make you see doctor?” Shane can feel the vibration of Ilya’s voice in his chest, pressed up close against Shane’s back and separated only by thin t-shirts.

Shane’s sigh carries a disgruntled note this time. “*No*. Didn’t want to let, *ugh*, y’know, *hormone bullshit* like this get in my medical file. And I’m already starting to feel better, which...I actually kind of hate. I didn’t want to believe this is what it was.” He’s reluctant to risk crying in front of Ilya by putting actual words to what they’re talking around instead of just being straightforward about. “Did you know?”

”Not until I smelled you at the game.”

Shane cringes internally at the embarrassing reminder, but at least Ilya’s scent is a warm blanket over him now. “Has this...have any of your hook-ups gotten sick like this before?”

.....

Seriously?

The very idea that anyone could ever need *him* never really occurred to Ilya until today. He would scoff at if he didn’t have the prettiest proof imaginable in his arms.

”No. Never before made an omega drop. I am sorry to cause this, Hollander.”

When Ilya think he hears Shane sniffing, he props himself back onto the stack of pillows and tugs Shane to face him.

“You sure?” Shane asks, with forced levity, but Ilya is pleased that he doesn’t resist as he’s urged to rest his head on Ilya’s chest. “Maybe you’ve got a whole string of tiny blondes with

broken hearts you don't know about. Maybe it's your fault for being *dickmatizing*."

Ilya winces. Knowing what he knows now, he definitely wishes he could go back in time and smack his past self before he sent some of those texts.

"I'm sorry," he says again. "Is my fault. I did not..." He hesitates over how to phrase the English. "Take proper care. I did not know I had to." It's the simplest explanation. And he couldn't have realized Shane needed it when Ilya was too selfishly wrapped up in convincing himself how little it mattered. Just *fucking*, he told himself.

Yeah, that obviously worked out great for all involved.

Ilya feels Shane shake his head. "*I'm* sorry. It's not your fault that my hormones don't know any better. This stupid body -"

"Is *beautiful* body," Ilya interrupts. He slides his hands up Shane's t-shirt, squeezing the hard-earned abs and pecs here and there as he goes. In Russian, he adds, because he can't help himself, "*And perfect for me, all mine.*"

Shane squirms, which gets his thigh rubbing against the erection in Ilya's shorts that Ilya has been - is still - untroubled by. But it's not like he isn't tempted, as he listens to Shane's breath hitch and the squirming starts to feel a little more deliberate.

The warmth and sweet scent of contented omega draped across his chest and so perfectly at home in Ilya's bed might be having a bit of an impact on his body, but Ilya has the kind of self-restraint, he thinks, that he deserves a fucking medal for.

"Is that the knot you promised me, Rozanov?"

He stops Shane with a firm hand on his hip, captures the omega's chin in his other hand, and tilts his face up so they can look at each other. Shane's eyes are watery and red-rimmed, a few stray tear tracks, no longer fresh. But whatever most imminent symptoms of the rejection sickness may have faded, the dark circles under his eyes haven't gone anywhere, and if Ilya had to guess, he's probably hardly eaten anything in who-knows-how-long.

Their noses brush. "Tomorrow," Ilya murmurs against Shane's bottom lip, before finally bringing their mouths together in a kiss.

.....

Shane is breathless by the time Ilya finishes kissing him, and he can't help the pleased little whimper that slips out of him as fingers begin carding through his hair.

"Tomorrow," Ilya says, and the word is rougher this time as the hand in Shane's hair guides him back down to rest his head between Ilya's pecs. "If you behave, *moy kotenok*."

Leaning into the scrape of fingernails across his scalp, Shane yawns. "What does that mean?"

"My kitten."

Shane makes a noise of protest in the back of his throat, and he turns his head to shoot a glare up at Ilya's crooked grin. "Seriously?"

"*Da*. It suits you, I think. Especially when your face crinkles up just like this." Ilya boops him on the nose and gives him another kiss, shorter this time.

Shane closes his eyes and grumbles. "If I'm a kitten, then what kind of pervert does that make you?"

A playful growl against Shane's ear. "Big Russian bear going to eat you up."

Teeth graze the underside of his jaw, and Shane finds himself baring his neck to seek more of that sharpness before he finally falls into an exhausted sleep.

Chapter End Notes

I lowkey cannot believe how long this chapter got and they didn't even fuck!!! Turns out I needed to write a LOT of nesting + comfort after episode 4 and god thinking about all the little intimate ways they touch and look at each other and are already so in love make me so fucking feral it's like I'm going insane lmao.

(It shouldn't progress beyond a chapter 3 because now we've basically arrived at the delicious make-up sex part of the story, though I might also write a heat/rut sync-up cottage sequel unless another brainworm gets me first.)

Also OMG THANK YOU EVERYONE for all of the feedback!! It is super motivating to know people actually like this and I really do appreciate every single comment because unfortunately I thrive on the external validation!! Especially if you mention any specific lines you like, which is super helpful. Thanks for reading and again for all of the positive feedback! Sorry as usual for any mistakes.

(Though fwiw it's not a mistake that I let them start thinking about each other using first names instead of last names partway through. I just, uh, idk, kinda committed to a shift in their mental intimacy at some point because I felt like I should, even if they don't acknowledge it explicitly to themselves.)

Hit me up on [twitter](#) if you want! Let's stay strong for episode 5 y'all. <3

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

Watching Shane fall asleep in his arms finally soothes the beast in Ilya's chest, agitated since that first whiff of those acrid and miserable pheromones before the start of their game. Possessive, smug, content - the omega needed *him*, this proved it, Shane Hollander is right where he belongs, and Ilya will be the world's best alpha and keep him there forever, soft and warm and taken care of, everything the omega won't accept from anyone but *him*.

Now that he's finally allowing it to click within himself and into place between them, the sense of rightness to it all is *terrifying*.

But when Ilya buries his nose in Shane's hair, the omega smells as contented as Ilya feels, and Ilya realizes his breathing has synced with the steady rise and fall of Shane's chest.

The cigarette and the chilly goodbye in Vegas, meant to put distance between them for his own fucking sanity, have in a certain way spectacularly backfired. Ilya regrets his casual cruelty - it almost makes him sick to think about now, that he'd *literally* made Shane sick because of it. Shane's hormones were just crying out for him to be *cared for*, because Ilya failed to do it, and Shane was still putting his body through the meat grinder because everything comes down to hockey, in the end, and an alpha sport like that couldn't just let Shane *be*.

"*Moy krepiy kotenok*," Ilya kisses the top of his head. *My tough kitten*. The best damn player in the league, except for Ilya, and even that could often be a toss-up. The fact that he happened to also be an omega shouldn't matter more than that. Ilya just knows Shane Hollander will be back to his usual dominant form on the ice in less than a week, and the thought both relieves and gives him an odd swell of pride.

Shane stirs slightly, but only to shift and roll over without waking or leaving the circle of Ilya's arms. Helpless against the pull of warmth, Ilya follows, spooning up against Shane's back with his head on the same pillow.

Now that Ilya has had a taste of just how right this feels, he fears he won't be able *not* to cling to it and risk fucking devastating himself in the process.

He's only vaguely aware he must also fall asleep at some point because he wakes up when it's still dark out, gasping, and his racing pulse doesn't settle until he's reminded himself that Shane is still right there, breathing even and still sleeping like the dead.

.....

Waking up in Ilya Rozanov's bed feels better than it has any right to, in Shane's opinion, though it takes several minutes for this to occur to him. As he first comes to reluctant

consciousness with eyes squeezed shut against the morning sun, he arches into the warm weight at his back, lazy pleasure just under the surface of his skin.

Sleepy. Happy. *Safe*. Surrounded by the smell of campfire in the snow and raw alpha sweat and musk.

He hums at the feeling of lips brushing his neck and a thick cock pressed up against his ass through boxers. Lulled by the security of his nest and appeased hormones still buzzing with the proximity of his body's favorite alpha, it takes longer than it should for any alarm bells to start ringing in Shane's head about just where he is and why, or wondering if he ought to try extricating himself from the situation entirely.

Without opening his eyes, Shane arches a little further into the body behind him, smiling drowsily, and the arm around his waist tightens.

"Sleeping beauty is being very naughty..." a voice rough with sleep and desire and a Russian accent thicker than usual murmurs against his ear.

It doesn't exactly *startle* Shane, but sends a faint jolt of anxious awareness through him that he's doing something he shouldn't be. *Enjoying* something and someone he shouldn't be. Though the brief instinct to flee that flashes through his brain is immediately smothered by the rest of his nervous system, perfectly at ease, he stops himself from leaning any further into Rozanov's touch and goes carefully still.

"Morning," he says aloud, aiming for relatively normal even though Shane has no idea what kind of baseline 'normal' exists in a situation this damn stupid and messy.

Rozanov's grip on him goes a little looser, the undercurrent in his voice more neutral. "How are you feeling? Sleep good?"

"Yeah, good. Better. Fucking great, actually." *Now that my body isn't trying to trick me into thinking I'm going to die of the pit in my chest you left behind - the downside being that I needed you to make me whole again.*

Now Shane's eyes were squeezed shut against the damp pressure building behind them.

Turns out it's really hard to pretend everything is fine instead of totally embarrassing when you're recovering from rejection sickness in the bed of the person who'd rejected you. And oh, they're also your biggest rival in the thing that has you keeping one giant secret already.

And Rozanov had never even 'rejected' Shane to begin with, had he? There was nothing between them to reject, nothing Shane asked for and was refused. It was all hormonal fucking bullshit.

But now it isn't the hormones that have him on the verge of tears, it's just...everything else.

Rozanov lifts himself onto his forearms to lean over Shane and try to look properly into his face, but Shane ducks his head.

"You are feeling better, but...this still troubles you, yes?"

Shane feels warm fingers under his chin, the brush of a thumb he dreads may have found a tear under one eye. However reluctantly, he lets his head be turned toward Rozanov, opens his eyes without needing to be asked.

“It’s fine. I’m fine,” Shane says, focusing on Rozanov’s chiseled jawline.

Another nudge to his chin, firmer than the last, and Shane finally brings himself to meet the gaze hovering above him, pale and inscrutable. Then Rozanov sneers.

“Shane Hollander, Mister *Fine*. Always *fine*. You stink like sickness and misery, play like shit for three games straight looking like zombie on ice. *Fine*.” When Shane makes a noise of protest and tries to turn his head, Rozanov holds him fast, the mocking twist of his lips turning melancholy. “Now in my bed, about to cry, not going anywhere, not running. But *I’m fine* is all you say for yourself, hm?”

“Why do you care?” Shane’s attempt at a scoff comes out more like a whine. “Can you not even just *pretend* to let me have some fucking dignity?”

“You should not have to pretend, here in nest, yes? Is safe place for omega, for you. Safe. For truth. No lying.” Rozanov kisses his cheek before adding, some gentleness returned, “I can leave, if that is better. Space, if you need.”

“No. That isn’t - don’t...” Shane wishes he could wipe his eyes but his arms are trapped between the two of them. “Stay.”

“Stay or don’t?”

“I - *stay*...” Shane’s fingers curl into the hem of Rozanov’s t-shirt. “I just...*I’m sorry*.”

“Sorry for what? You say sorry for nothing, Hollander. Is my fault, maybe, alpha of my caliber. Even omega strong as you can’t help but want.”

“Fuck off.”

Rozanov kisses him, then, maybe to stop him from putting up more of an argument as the alpha spreads Shane’s thighs open with the bulk of his hips and rubs their groins together. Shane’s breath hitches against his lips.

“Are you sorry for liking this, too?”

Rozanov moves to the corner of Shane’s mouth and downward from there, trailing kisses down the side of his neck. There’s the ghost of a sigh over Shane’s scent gland just before Rozanov’s helping him out of his shirt to leave an imprint of his teeth behind in one of Shane’s pecs. Shane hears himself whine as Ilya pinches his nipples and bites his other pec.

“Sorry for how pretty you wear marks for me?”

Then the alpha rears back onto his knees, taking the friction against Shane’s dick with him, to survey the expanse of Shane’s skin with a predatory glint in his eyes. Even though he hasn’t

taken his own shirt off, its snug fit leaves nothing to the imagination, and Shane's mouth practically waters at the inches of sculpted muscle looming over him.

Other parts of him are starting to get wet, too. Most obviously, a damp spot at the front of his underwear, upon which Rozanov's attention finally settles, though he doesn't yet reach out to touch.

"You are okay, Hollander? Wanting more?" A broad hand, warm on Shane's knee, offers reassurance unspoken.

"Yeah, yeah I'm good." And then, before the words can get stuck in his throat. "More, please."

"*Fuck*. Good boy." Rozanov leans down to kiss him again, hungrier than before, opening Shane's mouth beneath his and sliding their tongues together. He finishes the kiss with a sharp nibble to Shane's bottom lip and levels him with dark and warning eyes. "No more sorries. No more *fines*. No lying needed here, okay?" He pats the pillows surrounding Shane's head.

Then, just hard enough for Shane to feel his nails, Rozanov slowly drags his fingers from the tops of Shane's shoulders, over his nipples and the bite marks on his pecs, trembling abs, down to his hip flexors and the tops of his thighs.

"No sorries or pretending you aren't fucking perfect, like this, needing me," Rozanov says. His voice is deep enough to send shudders down Shane's spine as he lets himself be peeled out of his steadily dampening boxer shorts, which must wind up tossed over Rozanov's shoulder somewhere - Shane is way beyond caring.

.....

For a few seconds, drinking in the sight of the omega beneath him, pink-cheeked and glassy-eyed - and *ideal'nyy, fucking perfect*, he means it in any language - Ilya very nearly lets his guilt derail them. He sees how *soft* Shane is, tender-shelled and easy to crack open like an egg. And it's not like Ilya didn't know this before, and that's the thing - he *did* know this before, and was careless about it anyway, and what the hell has Ilya done to earn Shane placing himself back in his cruel hands so easily?

He kisses Shane again, more chaste this time, and tilts their foreheads together. "I promise I take proper care with you from now on. Okay?"

Shane wets his lower lip with the tip of his tongue and nods. His fingers twitch, although his arms stay at his sides as if Ilya has told him to keep them there. He hasn't, but - Ilya certainly doesn't mind. Moments of unspoken obedience like this between them have always been part of the thrill of their dynamic, in sync with one another far more than Ilya's experienced with any of his other sexual partners, regardless of their secondary genders.

It's a particularly heady feeling, but for now, Ilya won't let it distract him from his goal to give Shane some much-deserved pleasure and relief.

“Okay?” he asks again, when Shane doesn’t offer any initial response past the nod, and rubs his hands slowly up the backs of Shane’s thighs. “Answer with voice, if you want me to touch you more than this.”

It’s not like the smell of musk and honey-floral omega arousal that had been torturing Ilya for the past several minutes didn’t mostly give him the answer, but he likes to keep Shane verbal when he’s under for as long as possible, until he’s truly too overcome to form words. Especially given the omega’s current fragility, Ilya is trying to tread carefully.

He gets his answer without hesitation.

“Yes. *God* - yes, Ilya, please. Want you. Fuck, *more*.”

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Growling, Ilya pins him to the bed, and Shane arches up into the alpha body’s muscled heat. Ilya nuzzles and kisses his mouth, his chin, down the side of his neck and once more down the familiar trail of Shane’s body. He pauses at Shane’s nipples to lick and suck briefly on each one, making Shane whine and squirm in half-embarrassed pleasure.

Distantly, he’s aware of his slick beginning to soak the sheets under him. It’s the sort of thing he usually hates, another inconvenience of his designation he tends to be furtive about, and never happens to him outside of heat except for when he’s with Ilya. From the very first time in the locker room shower, when Shane’s hole started getting wet watching Ilya stroke himself and for several mortifying seconds feared he was in preheat (luckily, not the case), this is what the alpha does to him.

This time, the kisses go all the way down to Shane’s belly, where precum is pooling, and to the tip of his leaking cock. Unlike his typical behavior, Ilya doesn’t take the time to tease or make Shane beg for it. Instead, after a single, almost-tender to the head of Shane’s cock, Ilya takes him to the root in one smooth swallow.

“*Fuck*,” Shane gasps, mouth hanging open. He’s trying desperately to keep his hips still. “Oh, fuck. *Ilya*, your mouth - “

Ilya hums around him, head bobbing, and warm hands return a little more forcefully to the backs of Shane’s thighs. Shane moans, glutes squeezing, resisting the urge to fuck up into the hot suction of Ilya’s mouth. Arms still at his sides, his fingers claw uselessly at the sheets - pleasure is quickly unspooling low in his belly, much faster than Shane would prefer.

“Ilya, *Ilya* - “ His voice gets more desperate and one leg kicks weakly at the mattress.

Ilya grants him temporary mercy, releasing Shane’s cock to kiss his balls and then lower, lifting Shane’s legs into the air to nose at the copious amount of slick leaking from his hole. He hums again, giving Shane’s flexing hamstrings one final squeeze before releasing them.

“Roll over,” Ilya tells him, in a voice like sandpaper.

Shane obeys. As he's about to go onto his hands and knees, he feels a firm hand at the small of his back.

"On your belly."

This time, Ilya's tone makes Shane shudder as he complies. Ilya grabs one of the pillows from beside Shane's head and props it beneath his hips, directly under his groin, and the pressure is both a torment and a relief. And just as Shane is trying desperately not to think about the mess he's making, just like that, like a goddamn *mind-reader*, Rozanov practically coos into his ear:

"Look how wet all over my bed you're getting, Hollander."

Shane groans and tilts his head to one side, tries to catch a bleary glimpse of Ilya over his shoulder.

"Is *sexy*, how badly you want it, to see proof."

Shane's face goes even hotter as he feels Ilya spread his cheeks, baring his hole to the open air, and he smothers an embarrassed, hopelessly turned-on groan into the pillow. Bracing himself for the touch of fingers, the hot, wet slide of a tongue along his rim he gets instead has his entire convulsing in an unexpected shock of pleasure to his nerve endings. He *yelps*, and hears a low, satisfied chuckle behind him.

"Tastes good, too," Ilya says, with a bite to Shane's asscheek. "Sweet omega slick just for me. You like this?" The question ends on another direct lick to Shane's hole, making his toes curl and his breath catch in a high-pitched whine at the back of his throat.

"*Fuck*. Yeah. S'good."

Then Ilya really dives into, his big, strong hands keeping Shane spread open for the ministrations of his lips and tongue. Shane's knees dig into the bed as his body can't determine whether it wants to squirm into or away from the source of overwhelming pleasure. He feels himself getting wetter from Ilya's enthusiastic slobbering on top of his own slick. Finally, his hips buck shamelessly into the pillow, Ilya's firm hands encouraging the rhythm as he continued sloppily making out with Shane's hole.

"Good boy, look at you, so pretty," he pauses to murmur, and Shane feels an alpha dick still clad in underwear rubbing up against the back of one thigh. It has Shane's back trying to arch on instinct, though Ilya's grip keeps him from raising his ass in the air to present properly. Trapped between the mouth on his entrance and the pillow he's essentially been reduced to humping, all Shane can do is whimper wordlessly. There's no slow build or subtlety in how Ilya's working him toward helpless climax, and Shane is too far gone with pleasure too quickly even to be able to beg to be filled with cock.

"Come on, take what you need, just like this. Let me see you come."

Once more, Shane obeys, body played like an instrument, the sound and the orgasm drawn out of him like music. He comes with a loud groan, hip grinding messily into the pillow, cock

chafing against fabric well past soaked as the rest of his body twitches and shudders.

“Yes, fuck, so good, Shane. So, so good for me,” Shane hears purred directly into his ear.

He feels kisses on the back and sides of his neck and the sweat along his hairline. Ilya’s front is draped over his back, again, and his cock is still rock-hard against Shane’s backside. As Shane’s chest heaves and he catches his breath in the aftermath of his orgasm, Ilya tugs him off the pillow and onto his side, grabs a jersey at random from the nest surrounding them to wipe his belly clean. Though he hasn’t come yet, the alpha’s chest seems to be rumbling regardless, pressed up against Shane’s back and chin hooked over his shoulder.

Still, once he’s come back to himself enough to have some vague presence of mind, it prickles Shane to realize just how quickly Ilya pushed him over the edge with nothing more than his mouth and a damn pillow, leaving his own erection ignored. Shane wants to *be good*. To be *useful*. To have the privilege of his body used for his alpha’s pleasure and rewarded with a knot to fill him up.

Despite feeling sticky and worn-out and mostly boneless, Shane takes a deep breath and tries to roll out of Ilya’s arms and onto his hands and knees - an effort which promptly proves futile, as Ilya’s arms around him don’t yield an inch.

“You aren’t going anywhere, *moy kotenok*. Stay. Rest.”

“Let me - “ Shane huffs. “Aren’t you gonna fuck me?”

He doesn’t think he’s imagining the feeling of the shape of Ilya’s smirk in his hair.

“Was that not enough for you? Greedy.” Ilya pinches the outside of one of his thighs. “Later, I promise. If you keep behaving so sweet for me.”

Though his brain registers Ilya’s intent to be playful, another, more primal part of him wants to curl up in anxiety and self-loathing, wondering what’s he done wrong and how he can be better, worrying that all of this is out of nothing but Rozanov’s *pity* -

“Hollander. Hey. *Shane*.”

Shane finds himself on his back again, notably out of any of the damp spots, with Ilya hovering over him once more.

“Hush,” Ilya says, peppering kisses across his cheeks and nose. “You are sad, I can smell.” In an uncharacteristically awkward gesture, he scrubs the heel of his hand over his forehead and pushes his curls back behind his ears. “Is not you, sweetheart. You have done nothing wrong.” His hand slides down Shane’s belly, past his softening cock and balls, two fingers gently probing his slippery rim, and Shane winces with oversensitivity.

“I very much plan to fuck you later, if you will let me.” Ilya punctuates the statement with another kiss to Shane’s nose at the same time he wipes his fingers on the inside of Shane’s thigh. “I very much *want* to fuck you now, also, but...” He trails off, looking sheepish, and Shane’s gaze catches on the blush staining the alpha’s cheekbones. “My fault you are sick,

and I know you do not properly take care of yourself. *Agh*, is hard to think how to say in English, sounds very silly. When was last time you ate something, Hollander? My stupid alpha heart will not be full until I've fed you."

Shane blinks up at him, lets the Russian-accented rambling sink in and dissipate the irrational needles of insecurity threatening to poke out from under his skin.

Ilya might be right about Shane needing to eat something. Though he thinks he's not far off from being at one-hundred percent again - mostly normal in terms of his hormones and rather restored after a full night of some of the best sleep he thinks he's ever had - he knows he's been running on fumes for days in terms of actual fuel.

"Are you gonna order something?" Shane asks. The more he thinks about it, the better a meal of some sort sounds, and he's not in one of his usually picky moods about what it'll be.

Ilya shrugs. "I have food here. What, you think I can't grocery shop?"

"Fuck you, I didn't say that." Shane taps Ilya's hip with his knee, smiling, trying to ignore any self-consciousness about still being splayed out, naked, while Ilya is still dressed in a t-shirt and underwear. "So...is making sure I'm fed an alpha thing or a you thing?"

Another shrug, more put-out this time, and cheeks still red. "I don't know. Both? Is a 'take care of Shane Hollander' thing. What, am I asshole for that now?"

"Oh my god, shut up." Shane pushes himself up onto his elbows so he can lean forward to brush their heads together and kiss Ilya's jaw. "I am definitely going to need to reschedule my afternoon flight, aren't I?"

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That's...exactly what Ilya was afraid to bring up. Everything is easier between them when they aren't reminded of the more-than-minor inconveniences of the outside world. Here in Ilya's own home and own bed, in the nest put together by Shane of his blankets and clothes, it's even easier than usual to forget about those things. And Ilya doesn't want to risk whatever is slowly beginning to bloom between them by asking for too much.

But here, it seems, Shane is making an offering for which Ilya may carefully reach.

"You've been sick. Stay here for as long as until you're better. Eat, rest." He allows his lips to quirk upwards in a wicked flash. "*Fuck*, after that. Okay?"

Shane's expression turns regretful, and for a moment, Ilya feels the bottom drop out of his stomach and braces himself for refusal, gentle but realistic. Then Shane tells him, "I should really check my phone and come up with something to tell Hayden if nothing else...but I can probably get a flight back to Montreal tomorrow morning if that's not -"

"Yes!" Ilya cuts him off with a kiss too eager not to give away some of the emotion he's trying to suppress, the grin about to split across his face. "New flight, I drive you to airport tomorrow, *da*?"

“Just, um, maybe drop me off at the hotel a couple hours early? I’m sure I can get the reservation extended for a night, since I still have a whole-ass suitcase...”

“Yes, okay, sounds good.” Ilya kisses Shane on the mouth one more time and strokes his cheek with the pad of his thumb too tenderly not to be giving at least some tiny part of himself away. “Are you hungry? I will go check kitchen.” In spite of his wry brag about groceries, Ilya suddenly can’t remember what he has on hand and worries whatever he does won’t be to Shane’s taste. On impulse, he picks up one of Shane’s hands in his and presses his lips to the inside of his wrist. “You sleep. Nap? I cook. Yes?”

Shane nods. There’s a trace of anxiety to his scent, but Ilya knows that this is *different* than he’s used to. Than either of them are, though Ilya’s too taken over by the restless need to caretake to dwell too much on what all of this means between them. Ilya picks up his other hand to kiss that wrist, too, and is relieved to realize Shane’s smile hasn’t faltered since agreeing to stay until tomorrow morning.

“I need to text some people. Maybe make a few calls,” Shane says, making grabby hands at his phone tucked into the side of the nest with notifications muted. “If I doze off after that, just wake me up for breakfast. Lunch?” He looks down at his phone screen as Ilya places the device into his hands. “Okay, brunch-ish. That’s fine - *good*, I mean *good*,” he corrects, glancing up at Ilya, although Ilya is pretty sure that he himself was too entranced to have otherwise noticed the ‘slip’ if not for Shane catching it on his own. “Let me just, uh, get my life in order over here, yeah?”

“Yes, okay.” Ilya nods. “I go to kitchen.” He points in the direction of the bedroom door and down the hall. It’s pretty self-explanatory - Ilya’s place is nice, but it’s not a labyrinth. “Just, if you need anything.” *If you need me*, he almost says before thinking better of it. “I’m just over there, okay? Not leaving you alone.”

“It’s *fi* - not a problem.” Shane waves one hand dismissively and begins to craft a text message with the other, chewing thoughtfully on his lower lip. “I’m not gonna, like, relapse just because you go to the other room, Ilya.”

“Okay, *Shane*.” Just before Ilya climbs out of the nest, he leans in to bury his nose at the base of the omega’s neck and give himself the pleasure of a long, slow inhale of breath just next to the scent gland there. Is almost tempted to lick the spot, too, before he thinks better of it, reining in his self-control while he still can.

He keeps his eyes on Shane until he’s in the doorway, about to turn the corner, when he pauses to watch Shane tug over his head one of Ilya’s plain black gym t-shirts. Like the leather jacket from last night, the garment is oversized on Shane’s frame, making him look slighter than usual while dressed in something of Ilya’s. Still in the nest and obviously conscious of not having yet lost an iota of Ilya’s attention, Shane gives him a shy little wave, and Ilya has to wave back and turn on his heels toward the kitchen before his resolve is put any further to the test.

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Even with Ilya having temporarily vacated Shane's immediate vicinity, Shane feels too warm and fuzzy surrounded by the nest and the alpha's scent to do too much second-guessing of his own judgment - at least for the time being. For the next several minutes, he fumbles through his hotel and airline apps, dealing with the minor logistical hassles and accepting the extra costs without concern. Often it's the sort of thing he'd just text his mom about to politely ask her to handle for him, but, well. He's hoping that as long as he's back in Ottawa for his doctor's appointment in two days, he can avoid any interrogation about an extra night in Boston.

Hayden, however, is trickier. Shane already has a little leftover guilt from the night before for not giving him a head's up that he was leaving the hotel, but now he definitely needs to let his best friend know that he's not there and doesn't plan on coming back until a day later than originally planned, after Hayden's gone back to Montreal.

He decides a few scraps of truth and letting Hayden fill in the rest of the blanks himself might be the best bet.

Shane

Hey, not at the hotel this morning, back tomorrow instead

Sorry to disappear on everyone

Hayden

Dude what the hell???

Do I need to literally tie you to your bed to make you get some rest??? (not like that)

Where are you anyway?

Shane chews his lower lip, calculating precisely how much or how little he can get with telling him, when -

Hayden

Ohhhh this is a Lily thing isn't it

She's a Boston girl

Shane

if i say yes can you please just keep it to yourself?

Hayden

duh

Luckily, Hayden understands without needing it explained to him why Shane might need to be discreet about any potential partner, given the secrecy of his designation. Even if he was

interested in dating someone who would be remotely acceptable on a public level, they would by necessity become another keeper of his secret, and thus have obvious reason to wish to avoid any spotlight.

Any hurt that Hayden might feel by being excluded from this part of Shane's life is just another necessary part of upholding the lie.

(The fact that the 'Lily' Hayden has caught him texting a few too many times is not some nice girl from Boston but is actually Ilya Rozanov is...a whole other thing that makes Hayden's exclusion from this part of Shane's life pretty convenient.)

Shane

Then yes I'm at Lily's

Hayden

How are you feeling? still looked pretty terrible after the game last night, gotta be honest

Shane

Better

Hayden

I'm not going to ask if she's the reason you've been sick to begin with (because i know it's not my business!) but if she is, am i allowed to say I'm kind of mad at her?

If she has nothing to do with you being sick in the first place then disregard. Either way, glad you're feeling better, she better be making you rest

Shane gives Hayden's last text a thumbs up and sends a final response about seeing each other at Tuesday practice before finally putting his phone back down on the nightstand next to Ilya's bed, suddenly feeling very tired and hungry.

And lonely.

Which is ridiculous. Hayden would've been in the mood to yap some more, if Shane is really all that *lonely*. Which he isn't. Tired and hungry are givens, though, even with the solid ten or so hours he'd gotten last night, considering the sleep debt he's still working off. He could doze, like Ilya suggested, until whatever he's preparing to eat is ready. Probably *should*.

But - *Ilya*. Shane's brain catches upon the thought.

Muted sounds reach him from down the hall - the noise of dishes or pans or pantries (he can't quite tell, which means he really *will* need to get the name of the architect at some point, considering how often newer construction has awfully thin walls with nonexistent soundproofing).

Shane pulls on the first pair of shorts he can find, folded amongst the nest, which hang loose and low around his hips. Not for the first time, he tries to avoid examining just how much he enjoys the tangible evidence of the size difference between himself and Rozanov in the drape of an article of clothing along his frame. Before he can resist the impulse do otherwise, Shane's out of the nest, rubbing his eyes and clearing his throat as he shuffles down the hallway.

"Are you okay, Shane? How are you feeling?"

He's barely half a step into the kitchen when concerned eyes catch Shane's and he feels a hand on his bicep steering him to a stool at the breakfast bar on one end of the kitchen.

"Jesus, I'm not an invalid," he grumbles, sitting. Ilya releases his arm without letting go of him quite yet, sweeping his hand up Shane's shoulder to rest for a moment on the nape of his neck. It's very close to a scruff, and has Shane all but shuddering and blinking mindlessly up at the alpha above him, just before Ilya pats the top of his head and strides a few feet away to the stove.

He's still scrutinizing Shane over his shoulder as he picks up a spatula to poke at something in a frying pan on the stovetop. Whatever's cooking, while Shane's nose can't immediately identify it, gets his stomach rumbling without the faintest hint of nausea. With a slight smile, he leans forward on his elbows, thinks he sees the slight furrow in Ilya's brow disappear as the alpha gives him an unsobly appreciative once-over that Shane is too bashful to call out. Instead, he just comments upon the obvious.

"You're cooking?"

"*Da*. I didn't lie about grocery shopping, you know, but bad timing. Fridge is mostly empty." He gestures in its direction with the spatula. "Pancakes okay? Easy to make with what I have."

"Oh? Yeah, sounds great. Smells great, too." Shane is too ravenous and grateful to care about the lack of protein or a vegetable.

"So...Hollander." Ilya turns his attention to pancake flipping as his tone shifts to exceedingly casual. "You make sure no one thinks you're dead in the middle of Boston, get things changed around to stay another day?"

"Yup, all good. Hayden, uh, kind of figured out I have a Lily who may or may not live in Boston, so I think he's just relieved someone is looking after me." The thought of Hayden seeing just who *Lily* really is - Ilya Rozanov with curls gone the slightest bit frizzy, padding barefoot around his own kitchen, painfully and *adorably* domestic, cooking through a batch of homemade pancake batter - has Shane smothering a chuckle so Ilya doesn't look over to see the dopey curve to his grin.

(If this sight alone might just be enough to ruin Shane a tiny bit more, he's past the point of letting that freak him out too much, at least for now.)

Ilya's expression is predictably smug. "Did you also tell him I put his stinky napkin in the trash?"

"No! Is that really what you did?"

"No, it's with your bag. Belongs in trash though. Almost did not want in my house at all."

Weird, overdramatic alpha bullshit. Shane shakes his head, amused. Not wanting to pass up the rare chance at needling Rozanov, before he can overthink it, Shane asks, half-joking, "Are you always this territorial?"

Ilya doesn't look up from the stove, and Shane can't read anything more into the neutrality of his face in profile. "No," is all he says, and then, before Shane's brain has any time to put effort into interpreting *that*: "When is the last time you have pancakes, Hollander?"

"They make these ones with protein powder in them, and they're actually pretty - "

"Okay, no, shut up, these will definitely be better then."

With the last of the batter cooking and two lopsided stacks of pancakes split across two plates, Ilya grabs syrup and a jar of peanut butter from the fridge, the latter of which he waves in Shane's direction. "You can eat this? Protein."

Shane nods, and a few minutes later, Ilya slides him a full plate of pancakes slathered in melting peanut butter and far more syrup than Shane would've ever served himself, but, well - he's a *guest*. And Ilya, evidently, is doing something like *doting*. How can Shane complain about *that*?

The *thanks* is barely out of his mouth before he's shoveling sticky and sweet forkfuls into it, humming around the second bite and shooting Ilya - standing there and watching for his reaction - an enthusiastic thumbs up. It's a stereotype that omegas have a sweet tooth, and so if Shane has one, he refuses to acknowledge it and rarely indulges. But on the heels of his illness in particular, he really has no good reason *not* to enjoy the sugary deliciousness and mostly empty carbs without an ounce of guilt. He's already inhaled approximately half the plate by the time Ilya sits down at the breakfast bar beside him with his own portion. Neither of them pull away when their elbows brush.

Slowing his pace to avoid making himself sick all over again and better enjoy the second half of his meal, Shane intentionally knocks their knees together.

"These are really fucking good," he says, gesturing at the plate using his fork. "Also, thank you, seriously. For like...all of this. Letting me derail your life for a day or two."

"Is nothing, is easy. And is my fault you were sick to begin with. We know this - no need to keep pretending is some big mystery, okay?" Ilya nudges Shane's calf under the breakfast bar. "I was asshole in Vegas. You were sweet and pretty and so very good for me, and I was asshole."

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“...But you’re always an asshole.”

For the first time since sitting down at his side, Ilya makes a point of looking Shane in the eye as he utterly disregards Shane’s minor barb instead of rising to the bait. Having thought everything over, Ilya had earlier arrived at the conclusion that he owes Shane a little more honesty, after all he’d been through because of Ilya’s own selfishness.

“My alpha wanted - *I* wanted - to be...better. In Vegas. Nicer. After making you come all over yourself by being an asshole, what I wanted to do was kiss you and ask you to stay. But I thought would be better - easier - if I didn’t.” For *both* of their sakes, he’d genuinely believed. And nicotine was Ilya’s most comfortable vice, with the convenient side effect of helping to drive Hollander away, so he gave into that instead.

“Bad idea,” Ilya adds at the end, just in case it isn’t obvious.

“Do you not realize that everything about what we do is a bad idea?”

“Yes, some ways. I don’t care.” He shrugs, continuing to affect a casual tone as he looks back down at his plate and resumes eating. “Last time I think I know better than my instincts, I make you drop. But I will not make mistake again. Next time - every time - I follow alpha in this, instead. Better not just for you.”

It’s an annoyingly delicate task in imprecise English, to attempt to justify following the amorphous connection winding closer around the two of them - what they *both* want, if Ilya had to guess - without reducing them to nothing beyond their designations. But he also truly needs to make sure Shane knows that there is no shame or hardship in any of it, following what feels good and right with each other, driven by biology or otherwise, not just the sex, but...everything else, too. But he also has to tread lightly with his words, careful not to risk overstepping or saying something that will send the other man into a panicked spiral.

Before Shane can respond, Ilya plows ahead. “And why shouldn’t I be good to you after, hm? After you’ve obeyed me so nicely and taken my dick so pretty. Is not a chore, for me, you understand?”

From the corner of his eye, Ilya sees the slight flush in Shane’s cheeks as he nods. “Okay, yeah, sure. I get it, I guess.” He sets his fork down, and Ilya notes with some silent delight that he’s eaten his entire serving. “So...you really want to keep...seeing each other? Fucking, whatever. Doing this?”

It would be easier to pin him to the counter to show Shane just how much Ilya wants to keep doing this - doing *him* - any of it, all of it, Ilya feels greedier than he ever has in his life and he’ll take what he can get.

Instead, he chews over another affectedly casual bite of pancakes and shrugs. “Of course... don’t you?”

(The words are already out of his mouth before it hits Ilya just what a shitty, selfish response it is, on his part, considering he wasn’t the one made physically ill for almost two weeks due to the other person’s callous treatment. But there’s no point in rehashing it further or

languishing in his own guilt - he swallows another forkful of pancake and lets the question hang.)

“Yeah, I do,” Shane finally says, in one long defeated sigh.

The tension creeping under Ilya’s shoulder blades dissipates, and he ducks his head toward Shane’s to drop a kiss above the collar of his own shirt the omega is wearing. Which, yeah - the sight and the smell of him in Ilya’s clothes is definitely going to haunt Ilya for the rest of his life, but for now, the beast in his chest can’t do anything other than revel in it.

Shane lets out a surprised little noise of acknowledgement. Then he’s tilting his head to the side, one of those soft, almost drunken smiles spreading from his syrup-sweet mouth all the way to his eyes. The kind of softness Ilya took for granted and won’t again, at least for as long as Shane is still willing to melt like this for him.

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Despite dropping his head on Ilya’s shoulder, Shane can’t quite smother the yawn that follows. Even though the conversation makes his belly flutter in the best-worst sort of way, his belly is also *full* for the first time in days, and his body is still recovering from the physical exhaustion of his frazzled hormones.

Ilya stands up to collect their plates and kisses Shane on the forehead. In the minutes that follow, Shane almost falls asleep there, chin in his hands, elbows on the marble countertop and mumbling about *resting his eyelids*, until Ilya finally loses his patience and literally tosses Shane over one shoulder to carry him back to the nest.

Shane yelps as the world goes upside down and gravity temporarily ceases to exist. Ilya laughs, but his face is schooled back to sternness by the time he deposits Shane into his bed. He taps Shane on the nose with an index finger.

“*Sleep*,” he insists. “It’s no problem. You want me to stay?” Ilya pats the clothes folded on one side of the nest.

“I’m good. You don’t need to watch me sleep to make sure I don’t get sick again or something.” Shane says. “Go finish the dishes, do whatever else you need to do, I’m not just saying that.”

“Wow, you’re *bossy*, Hollander, telling me to do dishes in my own home like you aren’t a guest here -”

“Oh my god, shut up - I didn’t *mean it* like that.” The words end on a yawn into his forearm.

Ilya smirks. Ignoring blankets that would be better-suited to the task, he pulls his leather jacket up from the nest and drapes it over Shane. “Sleep,” he says again, a little more softly this time. “I come back, we take cat nap together, okay, *moy kotenok?*”

“Fuck off.”

(Less than fifteen minutes later, when Ilya returns to curl around him, Shane barely stirs other than to drift into his warmth.)

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It's evening by the time Shane wakes again, a few hours later, growing dark outside again. This time, it doesn't take him nearly as long to come to some awareness as to where he is, and zero panic to follow. Still, something in his movement or lack thereof must give his consciousness away somehow, and having indulged in the 'cat nap' or not, Ilya is too alert a predator not to notice, blinking sleepily awake himself. Shane is plastered to his side, head on Ilya's chest, both pairs of legs tangled together. Ilya's hand slides up Shane's back, beneath his t-shirt, gives a slight squeeze to the back of his neck.

"My bed and clothes all smell like you," Ilya says. Though he still sounds half-asleep, his fingers drum to life against the inside of Shane's forearm, along the veins, where the skin is palest and delicate. Intentionally or not, the tips of his fingers rest upon Shane's pulse - must be at least part of what had given him away.

"Send me your laundry bill." While the offer is sincere, it takes a modicum of effort for Shane to keep his voice light.

"Mmmm, no." Ilya buries his nose in the pillow where Shane's neck meets his shoulder. "Want all to smell like you for as long as possible."

Shane chooses to interpret that as an endearing exaggeration as opposed to a potential future health hazard. Already his thoughts shift elsewhere, toward maybe lowering his head just a few inches to taste Ilya's cock, craving the warm length against his tongue.

Then Ilya's eyes finally flutter open, peering down at Shane, and he once more uses his thumb and forefinger to tilt Shane's chin up and get a better, closer look at his face. At this point, Shane is used to not being able to hide from the alpha's penetrating gaze.

A thumb strokes the lower curve of Shane's bottom lip. "With your scent all over everything I own, who else will have me?"

"What?" Shane blinks. Attempting to ignore the sudden unpleasant tightness beneath his skin, he turns to logic. "No one is surprised by an alpha pro athlete smelling like random omega." In Shane's opinion, the *potential hook-ups are especially not surprised* is rather implied.

"Not like this." Ilya laces their fingers together and returns his face to Shane's neck - Shane distinctly feels the swipe of a tongue along his pulse. "Not with our scents together like this. Like, um, is hard to describe - "

"Don't." Shane thinks he already has some idea, anyway. At least to his nose, it's like campfire on the coldest night, burning wood and melting snow, with Shane's own honeyflower scent sweetening the smoke. With his suppressants, it doesn't risk being an identifying feature, as no one has ever detected it or seemed to bring it out of him like Rozanov does.

“What? I bring someone over, they know they don’t want to mess with the fierce omega claiming their territory, they leave. Could be big problem for me.”

Shane rolls out of Ilya’s arms to the far side of the bed and props himself up on his elbows. “Are you fucking serious right now?” Considering all Rozanov had promised to tempt him here, the borderline *affectionate* behavior since, Shane briefly feels as though a trapdoor has opened to empty him into a nightmare.

“Why? You see other alphas, don’t you? You know I see others, too.”

The rather elegant summary of their situation elides too much reality for Shane to bite his tongue and ignore. Other than some awkward above-the-waist-only encounters with betas and other omegas, Shane has been with a whopping total of two alphas. Aside from Rozanov, the second had been during a Mexico vacation, anonymous enough for Shane to take the risk, and was...perfectly *fine*.

And, of course, Shane knows that Ilya *fucking knows all of that*. Meanwhile, Ilya Rozanov has his own reputation of much more volume and notoriety than anything close to resembling Shane’s history. The fact that this is even a topic of conversation - after Ilya has made such a show of not only begging Shane to nest in his bed and his clothes, but blatant enjoyment of Shane’s omega scent amongst his things, even though Shane offered *literally less than three minutes ago to get the laundry taken care of* - is goddamn *mystifying* to Shane. And, far more than that, *annoying*. What exactly is Shane doing here, again, other than getting his hackles raised by a knothead who doesn’t think before running his mouth?

“This is really what you want to be talking about? Go fuck yourself, Rozanov. No one is stopping you from getting laid here or on the road, definitely not *my* fucking scent.”

“Mmm, no fair. Your scent ruin me for anyone else, Hollander.” He scoots a little closer to the edge of the nest where Shane is endeavoring not to cower. “Will be very lonely, no one to keep me company, jerking off to the smell of you.” Fingers reach out and lightly brush the tendons flexing in the back of Shane’s hand.

“Okay...and? Get your shit cleaned, man, I don’t know what to tell you. You’re just deciding to be - I don’t fucking know - *weird*, all of a sudden.”

The mattress shifts as Ilya rolls on top of him, pinning Shane to the bed with his weight. “The next time you have another alpha’s dick inside you, will you wish it was me?”

“What is all this shit about other alphas?” Shane spits, face hot and fighting the urge to bare his neck on instinct alone. Then, as an idea occurs to him with perhaps more heady relief than it should, the words spill out of him without any further thought: “You’re...*jealous*? You haven’t fucked me yet even though you promised me your knot *yesterday*, and you’re *jealous* of some goddamn future alpha who doesn’t even exist? Is that *really* what is happening right now?”

Uncertainty flickers in Ilya’s eyes. He sidles off of Shane and flops onto his back. “You’re right. Is stupid alpha thing. But it’s not just alphas. Has your omega never felt, *hmm*... possessive?”

That particular word in Ilya's voice may or may not do something to Shane's insides, which Shane has to try not to be distracted by.

Oh my god, this is actually just some extremely roundabout alpha bullshit.

It is, however, the kind of bullshit Shane has more sympathy for than to mock, so he considers a serious answer to Ilya's question. Omegas - especially those like Shane who fall far outside the wispy and docile stereotype - are often known to be more territorial than alphas, after all. But of all the instincts he's forced to quash on a regular basis, *possessiveness* doesn't even figure in the top five. He's certainly never allowed himself the cutting indulgence of even the feeling *especially* where Rozanov is concerned.

"Honestly, um, not really," he finally answers, after a few moments of thought.

"That is not how it looked last night, when you were rubbing your scent all over my things, building nest in my bed."

"That's - I - only because you *told me* to."

"Mm," Ilya growls in the affirmative. "I did."

"Well, just tell your alpha there's nothing to worry about anyway. You know what my life is like, the secrecy. The risk has never been worth it."

Except for you. Though if Ilya also hears the words hanging in the air between them, he lets them slide without comment. Instead, he turns his head to look at Shane, who stares up at the ceiling, pretending to ignore the intensity of his gaze. Again, Ilya's hand reaches toward him, hesitant - this time his fingers come to land on Shane's forearm, tracing a line dotted by dark brown freckles.

"You can be possessive of me," Ilya says, voice low, maybe shyer than Shane has ever heard it. "Or your omega can, whatever. Is only fair, in return for my stupid alpha jealousy."

Oh my god. They're agreeing not to see other people, Shane thinks, more than a little hysterically.

Meanwhile, there's a feral thing in Shane's chest he scarcely recognizes as part of himself baring its teeth in savage satisfaction.

Before he can second-guess himself, he rolls atop Ilya, straddling him in one fluid motion. Ilya's hands come up to rest on his waist, squeezing as Shane strips his shirt off, bared skin buzzing under Ilya's hungry admiration. His nipples are hard already, and as he grinds down against the bulge in Ilya's shorts - Shane's probably never felt more daring in his goddamn life.

"Then give me your cock, *alpha*. Stop worrying about other people and fill me the fuck up."

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“Going to make you choke on those words, omega.” The words burst out of Ilya in snarling Russian, no translation for Shane’s benefit. He surges upward, captures the nape of Shane’s neck to ensure there won’t be any escaping as Ilya brings their lips and tongue and teeth together in a brutal kiss. Shane moans unabashedly into Ilya’s mouth, hands sliding up beneath his t-shirt to clutch at bare skin stretched over ridges and planes of muscle, and Ilya feels each touch like a fresh bruise no one will ever see.

Mine. Mine. Mine.

He lets the word suffocate in the back of his throat, surrounded by Shane’s honeysuckle scent, the hint of omega musk in the air, the faintest remaining traces of maple syrup leftover on their lips.

“Look how wet you are already,” Ilya says. Not only a growing damp spot at the front of his shorts, where his erection rubs against Ilya’s. From the small of Shane’s back, Ilya’s fingers dip beneath his waistband, smearing through the slick between his cheeks.

As he rubs the pads of his fingers a little more deliberately along Shane’s slippery rim, Shane’s eyes close on a moan, head falling back and waist arching beautifully. Ilya takes the opportunity to flip their positions, ridding them both of the remainder of their clothes in the process. The shadow of a challenge never fails to get Ilya’s blood up, and never quite so powerfully as when Shane Hollander is concerned, both on the ice and off.

Occupying Shane’s mouth with his, Shane’s fingertips digging into Ilya’s shoulder blades, it isn’t nearly enough. He sucks on Shane’s lower lip, shifts to pressing kisses to his cheeks, his chin, behind his ears. For a few tender moments, he does nothing but nuzzle the scent gland in the omega’s neck with the tip of his nose, mouth closed and fangs kept carefully to himself. The sound of Shane whimpering in his ears makes Ilya’s cock ache, and he strokes himself once to take the edge off. At the same time, his mouth moves to just below Shane’s collarbone and Ilya finally allows his teeth the brief relief of sinking in, nibbling and sucking the skin purple-pink.

“Aghhh, fuck, Rozanov.” Shane’s attempt at a protest is as whiny as it is insincere. “I’m not a goddamn chew toy.”

“Hmmm. No, not chew toy. Other type. Fuck toy maybe?”

Shane groans and hikes his knees into the air as Ilya slides two fingers into his ass without further preamble.

“But no. Look at you,” Ilya continues. He wiggles his fingers just to feel Shane’s tight heat clench around them. “Fuck toy would not like it as much as you do.”

Being the one to put the omega on his back, make his eyes go hazy, lips pink and open and spit-shiny, pulling the prettiest noises out of him - it’s the most addicting feeling in the world, Ilya thinks, blood pumping with exhilaration not dissimilar to the thrill of being a menace on the ice or making a winning shot.

Shane's cock is leaking precum all over his belly. On impulse, Ilya drags his thumb through the puddle and holds it up to Shane's lips. Then, dark lashes fluttering around those damn baby deer eyes, the omega sucks the digit into his mouth without needing to be told, tongue curling around it lasciviously.

Ilya pushes his whole thumb between Shane's teeth, bullying to the back of his throat and holding it there for several seconds, drool accumulating in his cuticle and the crease of his knuckle. This time, when Shane groans, eyes glistening, Ilya can feel the vibration directly, thrumming straight through to his own cock. He thinks his other fingers are getting progressively wetter, too, buried in Shane's other end; Ilya thrusts them a few times to get the omega keening before adding a third, and Shane's legs hitch a little higher and wider, practically on Ilya's shoulders now.

Ilya finally slips the thumb out of his mouth, pauses to squeeze Shane's face and leave a smear of spit across his cheek.

"*Ilya*," he slurs. "Want you."

And *fuck* - Ilya could tell him to really *beg* for it, make him hold himself open with his ankles behind his damn head and hole on display like the world's filthiest yoga pose. Or smack his thigh and bark *present*, proceed to mount and rut him like a bitch. Get him pleading and desperate, use him, make him thank Ilya for it after.

He can do anything to Shane when he's like this. It's as humbling as it is intoxicating, and Ilya has to take a breath to steady himself, make sure he doesn't do anything reckless. Fondling Shane's chest, Ilya leans down to kiss him on the lips again, softer, and carefully withdraws his fingers. Then he kisses one of the muscled calves beside his head before letting Shane's legs slide off his shoulders.

"I will not last long once I'm inside you," Ilya admits, reaching toward the nightstand for a condom. He can hear the underlying shortness of his own breath betraying his urgency as much as the words themselves.

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Shane whines as he feels Ilya's fingers pull out of him. Back arching, he tries to hook his legs around the alpha's hips, bring him closer, keep him there, be finally fucking *filled* by him.

"Want to watch you ride me, beautiful," Ilya says, rolling onto his back and dragging Shane to straddle pale thighs sprinkled with coarse brown hair. "See the pretty faces you make when coming on my knot."

Shane's own thighs are trembling, but he flexes his hamstrings and braces his core, one hand resting on Ilya's chest for support just above the glimmering crucifix. His attention darts to the condom wrapper being torn open between the alpha's teeth.

"It's not like I can get pregnant on the suppressants I'm on, anyway."

Even though over half of the ingredients in his suppressant dose are functionally birth control, using a condom with Rozanov has never even been in question - Shane refuses to think about why he's offering this particular insight now, more articulately than he should probably be capable of.

Foil packet dangling open in his hand, Ilya pauses, looking up at Shane with wild, hungry eyes, pupils blown black, and he must easily read the remainder of what Shane will never admit to wanting out loud. After that minor hesitation, he plucks the condom out of its wrapper, grits his teeth while rolling it down over his cock.

"You don't know what else I want to do to you," Ilya says, voice guttural. One hand is rock-solid on Shane's hipbone, holding him steady as he positions himself above Ilya's cock. The other hand reaches up, and - though Shane's mouth falls half-open, expecting to feel fingers on his tongue - blunt fingertips instead scrape across the scent glands on either side of his neck. "If you let me knot you raw I won't be able to stop myself."

"Fuck." *Just fucking do it*, Shane doesn't say, sentiment held fast behind clenched teeth. He wraps his hand around Ilya's cock, thumb rubbing over right where he knows the knot will form, and slowly begins to lower himself upon it. "Oh *fuck*."

The stretch has his eyes rolling back, breathing hard through his nose. Both of Ilya's hands are on his hips now, hard enough to bruise, as Shane takes him inch by agonizing inch. When he finally bottoms out, the fullness has never seemed so satisfying.

"*Nngh*." He pitches forward, overwhelmed, panting against Ilya's mouth without an ounce of finesse.

Eyes closed, Ilya pants back, breath hot against Shane's lips. His hands smooth over the muscles in Shane's shoulders and back, down to palmfuls of his ass and up again, following no specific pattern but keeping Shane anchored to him all the same.

"*Da*, good, sweetheart?"

Kisses brush Shane's sweaty hairline.

"Yeah, fuck. *Finally*. Full." He uses his hands on Ilya's chest to lever upright, knees digging into the mattress on either side of Ilya's pelvis. In an experimental roll of his hips, the pleasurable fullness judders through him with a full-body spasm.

Ilya grunts and snaps his hips.

Shane gasps and jerks. For a few moments, all he can wonder about is what the skin beneath his fingers might taste like, if he could sink his teeth straight into the chiseled curve of Ilya's pec, leave his own damn mark there for no one else to see. He clenches his jaw while his body seeks its rhythm atop Ilya's, the alpha occasionally using his grip on Shane's hips to guide them.

"Not going to last," Ilya warns. Another thrust. The mattress shifts. "Feel so fucking - *fuck* - " he chokes off, switching briefly to spluttered Russian in which Shane can't catch a single

syllable.

Shane rocks in his lap, more frantic now that he can feel the swell of the knot starting to stretch his entrance, his insides. His own cock is still untouched between them, aching, but *fuck* - the overwhelming *fullness* under the base of his spine, the knife's edge of discomfort right where he doesn't think his body will be able to accommodate it, but then something between them and in him just *gives*, and his body *does* - it's his favorite fucking part, and Ilya knows that, too, driving him there.

"Come on, Shane, right after me, *da?*"

He must be waiting for some signal of agreement, because as Shane swallows, muscles tensing, and forces himself to nod, Ilya's head falls back and eyes shut. Muscles flex and hips stutter as he comes, growling and kneading the meat of Shane's ass.

Shane mewls as he feels the knot expand, locking their bodies together so that all he can do is grind and shiver helplessly through Ilya's orgasm, his own dick twitching and desperate for friction. Belly coiled tight and alpha trapped between his legs, at his mercy, Shane's *so goddamn full* it hurts - it's bliss.

"*Ah - ah - ah.*"

The knot itself is more than sufficient to wring breathless noises from Shane's throat. Then Ilya reaches up to pinch his nipples - two stinging plucks of pain along the vibrating string of pleasure drawn taut and tight - and that's all it takes, Shane is *gone*, body seizing, untouched cock spurting between them. He can't seem to stop moaning, riding out his orgasm, hips shifting like he'd try to escape from the overwhelming sensation of it all if he could - but he can't, held fast by the knot in his guts.

He's shivering until he isn't, though Shane can't tell how long it takes, blinking back to awareness on Ilya's chest. Judging by the lack of give in the knot still tying them together, it can't have been long.

Hands rub soothing circles into his back, lips brush his temple. Shane thinks this must be the most relaxed he's ever felt in his life. Peeled open, carved out, filled back up with something to keep him loose and boneless. Brainless. A water balloon full of cotton candy.

It must be the fuck-drunkness which helps him work up the nerve to ask:

"You could come to my cottage for a few weeks. When I go off my suppressants this summer for my usual yearly heat. Your rut is timed for the off-season, too, yeah?"

He keeps his head tucked up beneath Ilya's to avoid having to see the other man's expression, regardless of what it might be. And - *fuck* - Ilya swivels his hips in a motion that has Shane smothering whimpers in the hollow of the alpha's throat.

"You don't know what you're asking, *moy kotenok.*"

“Fuck you,” Shane gasps. “Yes I do. I wouldn’t let you bite me like *that*. It’s not like we would bond. But...” he trails off. In his current situation, it’s particularly impossible for Shane to summon any meaningful description of the empty misery of his heats spent in solitude. Professional heat partners - paid, legal, discreet - weren’t unheard of, though Shane had never taken the idea of hiring one at all seriously. A knotting dildo might have its downsides, but at least Shane didn’t need to worry about it perceiving and judging him.

“If you can’t - or don’t want to, whatever, I get it - no big deal. I know it’s hard, Russia, your family.” It’s true - Shane will weather it, if Ilya refuses, will understand regardless of the reason why. Sure, maybe a tiny part of him will unfairly resent the alpha forever for giving Shane the courage to *ask* such a stupid question to begin with but -

“Maybe.”

Shane is still remembering how to breathe when Ilya resumes speaking after a brief silence, and he feels the arms around him go a little bit tighter.

“*Da*, yes. I want to say *yes*, but...probably. Probably yes.”

“Really?” His voice goes up at the end in an embarrassingly hopeful note.

“Yes. Need to check a few things, talk to people. But I am going to try. Really.”

Ilya has a forearm thrown over his face, Shane sees with a pang of guilt as he finally dares to glance upwards. However, Ilya must peer down to try and catch a glimpse of Shane’s expression in the same moment, because their eyes meet, and Ilya’s lips curve into a crooked smile. Somewhat reassured, Shane forges ahead.

“You’ve mentioned...partnering omegas through heats before, yeah?”

“Yes.” No filthy hip-swiveling accompanies his answer this time. “Casual, to help, you know? I have rut partners, too. Is very hard to go without.”

“Don’t I know it,” Shane says, utterly lacking the inflection of a question, tone wry and bashful.

“Never heat and rut at same time though.” Fingers comb through Shane’s hair. “So. Is something different. Still new.”

“I - what? It’s not - you don’t need to *reassure* me of anything. No one’s expecting it to be *special*.” He enunciates the last word with extra disdain.

“Okay.” A warm puff of laughter hits Shane in the face. “Whatever you want. I will make sure it is very bad.” The arm over Ilya’s face drops to Shane’s shoulder, hand finding the back of his neck. Not squeezing, just resting there, a warm weight. “Opposite of special, just for you.”

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Sure, Ilya has to talk to his brother and his agent, but he usually needs two weeks completely clear for his rut, anyway. If it takes him a few additional days because he's going to fly to and from Canada for Shane's heat at the same time, then - well. Alexei will complain, but no one else will mind. It should be doable.

It will be just fine, Ilya thinks, as long as Shane doesn't decide to try and learn any Russian over the next few months. The language barrier between them has become too convenient an excuse for Ilya to slip into saying whatever the hell he wants to Shane, when his knot is forming and hindbrain running the motor behind his mouth.

It's the kind of talk that is *borderline* acceptable during someone's heat or rut, when hormones are out of control and no one can really help themselves. The fact that Ilya has gotten away with speaking like this to Shane without either of their cycles as an excuse is the sort of thing that Svetlana would probably slap him for, if somehow she found out.

And if he can't exercise any control over his tongue now, then when he's overcome by his rut and gets a taste of just how delicious Shane Hollander is for him in heat, Ilya is pretty sure he'll end up saying far worse.

A snippet, from less than ten minutes prior:

"One day, I will knot you full of my cum, fuck you over and over again until it takes, until your belly is round and you wear my mark on your neck and the world knows that you are mine."

.....

Once Ilya's knot has gone down, their bodies carefully disengaged with each other, and condom disposed of, Ilya helps Shane to the shower, teasing him along the way.

"Baby deer legs."

"*Ha*, you try walking after having *that* inside you."

Although neither of them really have the stamina to go again, they don't take their hands off each other in the shower. The small space and hot water are convenient excuses to enjoy the intimacy of nothing but one another's clean, wet, bare skin as their sweat and scents and cum are washed down the drain.

Afterwards, once he's been bundled into one of Ilya's hoodies and back into the nest - whose disarray Shane is too fucked-out to be bothered to straighten - Ilya returns with a plastic container of cold, long-since-syrup-drenched pancakes. Between thumb and forefinger he pinches bite-sized pieces, taking advantage of Shane's sleepy contentment to bring them directly to the omega's mouth, feeding him by hand. When Shane doesn't argue, Ilya purrs, and he lets his fingers linger upon his lips longer than strictly necessary after feeding him each bite, encouraging Shane to lick the syrup clean from his fingertips.

They *do* have the stamina to go again, after that, albeit lazily. The plastic container clatters to the floor, forgotten, as Shane crawls between Ilya's legs to nuzzle the trail of hair leading to

his half-hard cock. He sucks the alpha off indulgently for several minutes, slow and wet, until Ilya urges him off so both of them can lay down. with Ilya spooned up behind him.

He presses his cock into Shane just like that, and they both let out twin moans of relief. Ilya fucks him slow and lazy, hips pumping, face tucked into the back of Shane's neck. Among the friction of warm, damp skin and sounds of flesh slapping, Shane is able to let his mind drift with pleasure, forget for just a little while longer about the outside world, Ilya's arms anchoring him to nothing but sensation.

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It's early enough in the morning to still be dark outside when Shane finally has to pull himself out of the nest in Rozanov's bed for good. He rubs the tiredness from his eyes with the heels of his hands and tries not to make any noise as he gets to his feet. Still sleeping, Ilya almost immediately shifts to the part of the bed still warm from Shane's body. By the time Shane is back from brushing his teeth in the bathroom, however, Ilya is awake and squinting in his direction in the dark.

He half-expected Ilya to put up a little more of a fight, some token, near-joking resistance. Maybe he'd pin Shane to the bed and attempt to wheedle another few hours out of him, tempt him with the promise of another round or two of spectacular sex. Instead, the other man is uncharacteristically quiet, watching Shane with resigned eyes from the bed with his head propped up on one elbow. Shane tries to ignore the flush of self-consciousness it gives him, as he extricates his own few articles of clothing from the nest and changes into the clean set of sweats packed along in his overnight bag.

"Hollander. *Shane*."

His name is said with such an entreaty that it almost makes him flinch. "What?"

"Take something."

When Shane just looks at him, head slightly cocked to one side, Ilya repeats himself, waving at the nest. "Take something. Clothes. Shirts, sweatshirts, pants, whatever. *Take*."

"Are you sure?"

Ilya rolls his eyes. "No, I make offer, then call police after you leave to report thief. All part of plan to get you in handcuffs, you understand."

Shane catches the heather-gray t-shirt hurled in his direction just before it hits him in the face. "Okay, okay! I'll take this. And, um - "

"Take whatever. Seriously, anything. I don't care. I want you to have anything."

In the end, he limits himself to two t-shirts, a pair of gym shorts, and a pair of sweatpants, all soft and well-worn and smelling like Ilya. Before they leave, he catches Ilya trying to slip a few extra things - including a particularly disgusting Bears jersey - into his duffel bag, all of which Shane rejects.

“I don’t need your entire closet...how about you save something to give me the next time we see each other?” Shane suggests, upon being confronted with Ilya’s pout. Though he also adds, pointing at the jersey, “Not that.”

(The fact that Shane re-buried his own dirty t-shirt beneath the rest of Ilya’s clothes still lining the mattress while Ilya was in the bathroom, luckily, appears to pass unnoticed.)

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“You will tell me, if you get sick again,” Ilya says, during the drive back to Shane’s hotel in the middle of the city. It’s quiet, sky a murky gray, rain coming down in too fine a mist for the windshield wipers to be on any setting other than their slowest.

He doesn’t miss the slight furrow of annoyance Shane’s brows, despite readily agreeing without protest. “Yeah, sure.”

“Seriously. It will not be problem, if something happens. We will figure it out.” He doesn’t want to be an overbearing dick about it, especially given Shane’s blatant distaste for the topic of his rejection sickness, but - *fuck*, the omega suffering in miserable and solitary silence, all because of Ilya - the thought alone is almost enough to make his stomach curdle.

Without looking at the other man or thinking overlong about the gesture, Ilya captures Shane’s wrist, presses a brief kiss to the back of his hand before releasing him. “Just tell me, okay?”

“I already said yes,” Shane grumbles. From the corner of his eye, Ilya sees his cheeks are pink. The hand Ilya kissed is clutched to his chest like some kind of scandalized maiden and all it does is make Ilya wish he wasn’t driving so he could kiss Shane some more. “And anyway, I really think I’m good. I don’t feel at all like...like last time.”

He gives Ilya a tentative pat on the knee, pretty obviously telling the truth. Scandalized-maiden pose aside, Shane’s shoulders are loose, and he smells mostly like vanilla contentment beneath the blanket of Ilya’s own scent. The warning signs Ilya is on the lookout for, this time, just aren’t there. And Ilya is *relieved*, of course. He’s grateful that everything he’s done seems to have worked, that he can send Shane back to Montreal with the traces of a smile in his eyes and the corners of his mouth. Though if for some reason it hadn’t yet been sufficient and Shane still needed more time to recover, another day or two spent curled up and nesting in Ilya’s bed - Ilya wouldn’t mind that, either.

“You’ll be okay, too, right?” Shane asks, interrupting Ilya’s train of thought.

“Hm? What do you mean?”

“Just want to make sure that...you’re good, too. Now, later, whatever, you know?”

Ilya’s eyebrows raise. “You know alphas can’t get rejection sickness, right Hollander? Sorry, is only omega thing.” It’s easier for Ilya to pretend to be amused by Shane’s concern than risk betraying whatever other feeling it’s evoking in him, flickering, unexpected and unreadable.

“Not that I would feel very rejected anyway, considering just how greedily your pretty hole accepted my - “

“Fuck off, forget it.”

In Ilya’s opinion, Shane only looks more kissable when he pouts.

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They’re two blocks from the hotel when Shane has Ilya drop him off on the sidewalk downtown. Their hands, which found one another sometime during the course of the drive, part ways with a final, lingering squeeze on both sides. They don’t kiss or even seem to glance at one another as Shane grabs his bag, opens the car door, and shuts it behind him without looking back. He’d mapped the precise route with his phone on the way over, knows exactly which street to head down and in what direction. He has no need to turn around even once.

It’s a five minute walk from there, air brisk, and he tucks his wrists and the palms of his hands into his sweatshirt sleeves. He keeps his head down as he enters the hotel lobby and heads straight for the bank of elevators near the back, punches the ‘Up’ button with an index finger. As he waits for the elevator to arrive, out of habit and idle boredom as much as anything else, he pulls his phone out of his pocket and flicks upwards on the screen to unlock it.

One new notification, from three minutes ago, though Shane hadn’t felt the ping on his walk over. He types out and hits ‘Send’ on not just one but two responses just before the elevator dings to signal its arrival.

Lily



Shane

Made it back to hotel fine

Good I meant good, all good ;)

The new ache in his chest, Shane suspects, doesn’t have anything to do with rejection sickness at all.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the extra long final chapter! What is pacing anyway??? Writing endings is so hard.

Thank you everyone for all of the wonderful comments on the previous chapters that really helped me reach the finish line on this fic (and honestly encouraged me to follow my gut and keep making it longer). I treasure every bit of encouragement, especially if you can let me know something specific you liked. <3 I have a few non-omegaverse plot ideas for Hollanov that are teasing my brain right now, but I also really want to write a sequel specifically for this fic's version of them where they get to spend their heat and rut together at the cottage for the first time! (I have so many ideas for all of the pervert shit they're gonna do when they're out of control lmao.)

I really wanted to have this finished and posted before the finale but that didn't work out, sorry! I was also very conscious while writing this that it's very ooc in the sense that their relationship/feelings-realization moves a LOT faster than in canon. That said, I tried to let that go mentally and just roll with what the versions of them in my head wanted to do, because, y'know, omegaverse nonsense!!! Rushing relationship development because hormones is part of the jam, right?? (I also decided omega!Shane could hook up with Mexico top earlier, though I know timeline-wise that's not correct.)

Oh also, no tuna melts here, and I wanted to explain my thought process: 1. I can't improve on the original, 2. Ilya wasn't prepared with tuna melt ingredients in this scenario, and 3. tuna melts seem extra yucky on omegaverse senses lol.

Btw also I apologize to the Russian language for my use of Google translate.

Oh lol and let's just keep pretending the actors don't know what omegaverse is for my own sanity.

Lastly, feel free to hit me up on [twitter](#) where I'm pretty shy but occasionally scream into the void.

1/19 author update (if anyone sees this?): So way more people have asked about the cottage sequel than I expected so I figured I would just add here that I've started it and you'll notice this fic is now part of a series! So the sequel is there. <3

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