

you're all that i need (underneath the tree)

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by [strwbrryfox](#)

Summary

“Hollander,” Ilya greeted. He was leaning over the partition of Shane's desk with a lop-sided smile on his face.

“Rozanov,” Shane said pointedly.

“You sound upset.”

“I’m not upset.”

“It is too early in the morning for you to look like you want to kill me,” Ilya pointed out.

“It’s never too early for that,” Shane threw back, unnecessarily shuffling some papers around on his desk. “Do you need something?”

“A pen,” Ilya shrugged, not being able to stop the dumb smile forming on his face at Shane’s reaction.

or, ilya and shane are co-workers. they like each other but are oblivious idiots about it. also, it's christmas!

Notes

hihi!!

my first hollanov fic is here (it was only a matter of time) these two have a death grip on me atm, and i can't get them out of my head so!! here's a cute lil christmas fic about them.

thank you to lauren and kim for betaing. love you both ♥

i hope you enjoy!

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

Ilya had a thing for his co-worker.

He hadn't thought so at first.

For at least six months, he was in deep denial—he had nothing to compare these feelings to. Ilya Rozanov didn't *get* crushes.

Ilya had started at the company nearly a year ago, after months of searching for a new job out of college. He hadn't planned to accept the first job that offered him a role, but well. He had been desperate.

A Customer Service Representative for a large corporate company wasn't his first choice, but it was a job. One with benefits and that provided him with financial security for the first time in his life. It also, he figured, would help him improve his English.

On his first day, he received a welcome bag full of pens and a company mug, a six-by-six cubicle, and a tour from Shane Hollander that he was pretty sure he didn't breathe once through.

"This is you," Shane had said when they reached Ilya's cubicle, his eyes diverted to the floor. "You can, uh, settle in, and let me or HR know if you need anything."

"Anything?" Ilya had asked, a subtle grin on his face.

Shane had just nodded and shuffled away nervously. Ilya still smiled when he thought about it, which was incredibly embarrassing.

Since that day, for almost a year now, Shane Hollander consumed his thoughts in a way that nothing ever had. Everything, from the way his face scrunched up when he was thinking, to his boring lunches that were always packed neatly in the same blue and red lunch bag. It was all so inexplicably endearing to Ilya, and he couldn't shake the thought of him if he tried.

He was also extremely hot. His dark, earnest eyes and freckles that Ilya caught himself staring at way too fucking often. Ilya was so attracted to him that most days he had to take smoke breaks outside just to calm his nerves. It was either that or slam his head into the nearest brick wall.

So, yes. Shane had Ilya in a chokehold, and he had absolutely no idea.

He'd thought about telling Shane so many times throughout the year they'd worked together. There had been corporate events, office outings, awkward elevator rides, even.

But there had never been a good time. In any sense, the idea of saying it out loud terrified Ilya to his core. Ilya, who was usually cool, calm, and collected and never had an issue saying exactly what was on his mind, who definitely *didn't* have a problem picking up literally anyone he wanted, ever.

But Ilya didn't know how Shane felt. He couldn't, for the life of him, tell if Shane felt the same way, or if he hated Ilya's guts. Shane blushed whenever he was around Ilya, and in the same breath, looked at him as though he was the most irritating person he'd ever met.

Those odds were never enough for Ilya to put himself out there like that, so there he was at nearly ten o'clock on a Friday morning, at Shane's desk, waiting for him to get off what was probably an unimportant phone call.

Shane noticed Ilya looming over his desk, his brow raising as though to ask if what Ilya wanted was worth hanging up the call over.

Ilya just picked up one of the pictures that was on Shane's desk and looked at it. It was of his parents, which was honestly sweet. He turned the frame around and tilted his head to the side, mockingly.

Shane rolled his eyes.

"Uh, you know what? Can I call you back in a few minutes?" Shane said into the phone.

"Yes, so sorry. Just five minutes."

Shane hung the phone back onto its receiver and looked up at Ilya with an exhausted look on his face—as though he was already anticipating the worst.

"Hollander," Ilya greeted. He was leaning over the partition of Shane's desk with a lop-sided smile on his face.

"*Rozanov*," Shane said pointedly.

"You sound upset."

"I'm not upset."

"It is too early in the morning for you to look like you want to kill me," Ilya pointed out.

"It's never too early for that," Shane threw back, unnecessarily shuffling some papers around on his desk. "Do you need something?"

"A pen," Ilya shrugged, not being able to stop the dumb smile forming on his face at Shane's reaction.

"What happened to the one you stole two days ago?" Shane demanded, as though he sourced the pens himself, and they weren't company-provided.

Ilya knew exactly where it was. In the bottom drawer of his desk, with all of the other office supplies he'd "borrowed" from Shane over the last year.

Instead, he just shrugged and said, "I must have lost it."

"And that's my problem?"

“Well.” Ilya leaned down closer. “The thing is, I need to fill out that boring report for your department. Your memo said it needs to be done end of day.” He shrugged with one shoulder, innocently, and added, “So, if you want it finished, I will need a pen. Please.”

If looks could kill, Ilya would be a pile of ash and dust.

“This is the last time, Rozanov. I’m serious,” Shane said through gritted teeth as he opened his top drawer and pulled out a black ballpoint pen.

Ilya smiled and reached out to take it, making sure that their fingers brushed together.

“You have my word,” Ilya assured him, with a sultry wink.

They both knew good and well that he’d be back in a few days, and that Shane would probably give in just as easily.

Ilya had filled out the monthly report wrong for the fourth time that year. He liked to alternate it with a few other mistakes that would have Shane angrily shuffling over to correct him.

Like clockwork, Shane was marching over to his desk after lunch, a haunted expression on his face.

He was like Ilya’s own personal storm cloud. Luckily, Ilya had always been fond of thunderstorms.

Ilya leaned back in his chair, smirking to himself as he waited to be chastised.

“Hollander,” he said. “You still look upset.”

“You filled these out wrong.”

“Did I?”

“You did,” Shane confirmed, irritation thick in his tone. “I think you know that.”

“You are accusing me of purposely messing up your boring forms? Why would I want to do the work a second time?”

“Funny, I was just asking myself the same thing,” Shane said as he threw the folder down on Ilya’s desk. “But here we are.”

Ilya didn’t know how, after nearly a year of this, Hollander didn’t have any sense of what Ilya was trying to do. If Ilya messed up the forms, it meant that he and Shane would need to stay later to “fix” them, which meant Ilya got to spend time with him alone.

“Maybe I do not know how,” Ilya said. “Maybe I need you to show me.”

“I showed you a few months ago,” Shane insisted. “For a third time.”

Ilya pretended to think about it for a moment. “Are you sure that was me?”

Of course, it had happened. Shane had sat next to him at Ilya’s desk and explained it thoroughly.

Except Ilya wasn’t listening. All he remembered was having to resist the urge to reach out and run his finger along the light dusting of freckles on Shane’s cheeks. He was *infatuated*. It was *disgusting*.

“It was definitely someone as insufferable as you.”

“Insufferable,” Ilya repeated, more to himself than anything. He’d have to look up the word later.

Shane eyed him for a moment, “Yeah. Incredibly.”

“Hm, the word sounds bad.”

“It’s not great.”

“Maybe I am not *insufferable*, then,” Ilya said. “Maybe I just like when you come over here and get bossy with me.”

Shane looked away quickly, his cheeks turning pink. Ilya loved it when they did that. He loved being the reason they did that.

“I’ll send you a memo on how to do it properly,” Shane murmured under his breath. He spun on his heel and walked away before Ilya had a chance to reply.

Ilya just stared after him, smiling despite himself.

His friend, Troy, rolled his chair out of his cubicle into the walkway. He gave Ilya a knowing look, confirming he’d just heard everything.

“I guess you haven’t told him yet, huh?” he asked.

“Did it not take you two years to tell Harris?”

“We were friends at least.”

“I hear you make fool of yourself at the reception desk at least three times a week,” Ilya said. “You tried to flirt with him and ended up knocking over the little jar of candy he keeps on the desk.”

Troy smiled and scooted his chair into the entrance of Ilya’s cubicle. “Are you even making progress?”

“Sure,” Ilya shrugged, holding up the folder. “We are going to stay late now.”

“Don’t you think it would be easier just to tell him?” Troy said. “He obviously likes you, too.”

No. The idea of being rejected after all the yearning I’ve done might just kill me.

Ilya waved him off. “I have him right where I want him.”

“Which is where? Wanting to throw you off the fourteenth floor?”

Ilya laughed and shook his head. “He couldn’t. I’m stronger.”

Troy snorted. “I think if you’re making him stay tonight, you should at least shoot your shot, Roz. That’s what you told me to do. Look where it got me.”

Ilya nodded absentmindedly. He probably wouldn’t be doing *that*, but the thought was nice.

“You still coming over Christmas Eve?” Troy asked after a few moments of silence.

“Wherever Chiron is, I will be,” Ilya answered.

Troy chuckled, and then his chair was sliding out of view again. Ilya smiled to himself. He’d never admit it out loud, but he was secretly very grateful not to be spending Christmas alone.

Shane was overwhelmed. But what else was new?

He felt like he was in a constant state of exhaustion, a heaviness behind his eyes that never seemed to go away, no matter how much he did or didn’t sleep.

Even when he was at home, his mind was racing, worrying about all the things he had to finish the next day at work. Worrying about phone calls he had to make, people he needed to check in with, loose ends that needed tying up. It was unsustainable. He knew it was.

December was their busiest time of year by far, with projects wrapping up and tax season around the corner. Shane always struggled to keep his head above water at work, and the worst part about *that* was that it left very little of his energy at the end of the day to get into the Christmas spirit.

It had been that way for the past few years, and he hated it. Christmas was always his favourite time of year.

Last year, he’d sworn up and down that it would be his last Christmas with the company—that he’d give his two weeks in January and find a job that didn’t suck the life out of him. But, well. The timing didn’t pan out. Or at least that’s what he told himself.

In actuality, it was because the company had to go and hire a certain cocky Russian who’d infiltrated Shane’s thoughts and wouldn’t fucking leave, no matter how hard he tried to shake him.

Shane had been harbouring a big, embarrassing crush on Ilya Rozanov since he started at the company a year ago.

His best friend, Hayden, had clocked it within a few days of Ilya being there—not the best person to have knowing a secret like that, considering Hayden was in HR. Apparently, Shane was shit at being discreet.

He'd tried to keep it under wraps since then, staying away from Ilya so that he didn't put himself, Hayden, or the company in an awkward position, but well. That was a tough feat when they were literally co-workers, and Shane had to see him every day.

The worst part was that he was pretty sure Ilya hated him. He was constantly finding ways to fuck with Shane, whether that be stealing his office supplies or pretending he didn't know how to do his job, which, in turn, made Shane's job harder. Or slipping notes under his keyboard with random Russian phrases on them that Shane used company time to translate because he couldn't help himself.

He also couldn't help that whenever Ilya needed a pen or help filling out a form, or literally anything else, for that matter, Shane was ready and willing to help him.

Because at the end of the day, Shane was pathetic. And infatuated. He didn't even recognize himself around Ilya. He made Shane want to do incredibly embarrassing things—like staying in a job he hated a whole year after he said he'd quit.

And now he was staying late for the fourth time this week. This time, he had to stay late *with* Ilya, which made him want to throw up because of how nervous it made him.

At 5:15 pm, he found Ilya at his desk, sat back in his chair, legs parted as though he was waiting for Shane. He had loosened his tie and undid the first few buttons of his shirt, his dress pants riding up his thighs and leaving very little to the imagination.

Ilya had pulled up a spare chair into the cramped space, which Shane assumed was supposed to be for him.

"You could have started without me, you know," Shane muttered, snapping his eyes away quickly.

"I didn't want to be rude."

"It's a bit too late for that, I think," Shane threw back. "And I'm not staying. I just came over here to make sure you're doing what you're supposed to be doing."

Ilya chuckled softly, his eyes travelling down to the laptop in Shane's hand as he swivelled a little in his chair. The least he could do, for Shane's sanity, was not sit like that.

"You should stay," Ilya told him, nodding to the vacant seat. "In case I need help."

Shane reluctantly sat down. He didn't know why he did. This was such a fucking bad idea.

"Your mood hasn't improved," Ilya said as he watched Shane settle in.

“Well, it’s Friday night, and I could be spending it doing...things,” Shane said, opening his laptop. “But instead I’m stuck here, babysitting you while you finish your work.”

“Things,” Ilya repeated. “What kind of things do you have planned tonight, Hollander?”

He sounded amused at the idea of Shane having a life outside of the office.

“Nothing.” Shane shook his head dismissively. He knew Ilya wasn't going to let it go.

“Do you have a date or something?”

Shane almost scoffed at that. *No*, he wanted to say. *I’m way too hung up on your cocky ass to even think about anyone else.*

“Maybe I do,” Shane answered for some fucking reason.

He could feel Ilya’s eyes on him, his shoulders lowering slightly.

Ilya picked up his pen and opened the folder wordlessly.

They sat in silence for a few long minutes, Shane not allowing his eyes to wander over to Ilya. He tried to focus on reading the words on his screen, but their knees were cramped together under the desk, which definitely wasn’t helping. All Shane could think about was how fucking *good* Ilya looked today. He usually reserved this particular thought process for his drives home, not for when Ilya was right in front of him. Shane was a fucking mess. He needed to leave. Go back to his desk or—

“Do you, uhm, do anything for Christmas?” Ilya asked, suddenly.

Shane blinked at him. *What?*

“I usually spend it with my parents,” Shane said, simply.

“What about before?” Ilya asked.

“Before?”

“Well, there are things to do before Christmas, yes? Troy told me that he goes skating with Harris every year. They also said they sing outside innocent people’s houses. Is silly, but they say it’s tradition, or whatever.”

Shane wondered where this could possibly be going.

“Oh, yeah. Uhm. I mean. Sometimes. But not much in the last few years.”

“Why not? Are you a...what do you call him? The old man who hates Christmas?”

“A *Scrooge*?”

“Yes! Him.”

Shane laughed and shook his head. “No. I’m not. Not at all, actually.”

“So you like doing things like that?”

“Yeah, I mean,” Shane paused, trying to gauge whether he wanted to go *there* with Ilya or not. “I mean, I used to.”

“But not anymore?”

“Something like that.”

He felt Ilya’s eyes on him, and it was clear to Shane that he was waiting for him to continue. There wasn’t any judgment in his tone, just subtle curiosity.

“I used to look forward to this time of year, but now...I just feel like I don’t have time or energy to enjoy it because I’m always working,” Shane admitted.

Ilya seemed to consider this. “What would you want to do? If you had time?”

“It’s probably stupid.”

Ilya shook his head and turned his body to face Shane, as though to show he was listening.

“I mean, I like looking at Christmas lights. There’s a festival in Old Montreal, and it’s beautiful. I used to go every year. And, I don’t know. I’d love to sit around and watch those stupid Hallmark movies that take over every channel. They suck, but they feel like what you’re supposed to be doing this time of year. Or like, build a fucking gingerbread house or something. I don’t know.”

He couldn’t believe he’d just said all that. It was the most he’d spoken to Ilya in the year they’d worked together.

Shane glanced up to see Ilya staring at him, a lop-sided smile on his face that Shane couldn’t decipher the meaning of.

“But by the time everything here is wrapped up, there’s like three days until Christmas and... yeah,” Shane finished, and turned back to his laptop again, realizing he was starting to *sound* like one of those stupid Hallmark movies.

“You work too hard,” Ilya told him.

“Yeah, well. Half my job is making sure people do their shit properly,” Shane said, pointedly. “And correcting them when they inevitably *don’t*.”

“That is best part of your job,” Ilya said, simply.

Shane snorted softly. It *was*. It was the only reason he was still there—these stupid, pathetic, stolen moments.

Ilya's gaze lingered on Shane's for another moment before he picked up his pen and began scribbling again.

"We could go," Ilya said a few moments later.

"Go where?"

"To see your lights."

Shane's chest swelled, his heart pounding so hard he could feel it in his throat.

"We, as in..."

"You and me," Ilya said, his tone soft.

"Oh, um. I—"

"Are you two still here?" Hayden's voice cut through the moment like a knife.

Shane jumped out of his seat and tried to play it off like he was getting up anyway. He let out an awkward laugh because what the fuck else was he supposed to do?

Ilya was glaring a hole into the side of Hayden's head, which wasn't exactly abnormal. Their working relationship had never been civil, but Ilya seemed more upset than usual to see him.

"We were just finishing up," Shane said quickly. "Right?" He gave a sideways glance over to Ilya, who just gave a curt nod.

"Okay. Well, I'm heading out. See you guys tomorrow," Hayden said, raising an eyebrow at Shane, who knew he'd be receiving a text about this later.

Ilya muttered something under his breath in Russian and quickly glanced up at Shane. He looked like he was about to say something else.

"I need something from my desk, so," Shane said quickly. "Maybe, uh. Just bring it over when you're finished." He didn't wait for Ilya to respond before he was hightailing out of there.

When he got to his desk, he slumped down in his chair and rested his head on the table top. The feeling of dread in his chest had been quick to dim the momentary spark of hopefulness.

Shane *couldn't* go see the lights with Ilya. Not when his heart would be hammering in his chest the entire time. Not when he knew it wouldn't mean what he wanted it to. Not when he'd be wishing the whole time that it *did*.

He couldn't put himself through that. He just couldn't.

Shane looked to be deep in thought in the lunch room the following Wednesday. Ilya hadn't spoken to him since he'd essentially asked him out in his cubicle, only to be physically ghosted before he could press for an answer.

He wanted to bring it up, but it felt like a weird thing to do during official work hours. He didn't want to make Shane uncomfortable. Maybe it would be better to pretend it never happened—avoidance at its finest. His therapist would be so proud of him.

"Hey," Ilya said, on his way to the vending machine.

"Hey," Shane responded, not looking up from his food—a plain-looking chicken salad.

Ilya searched for something to say as he put his quarters into the machine and pressed the button for his Coke.

"Look, Hollander. About the other night. I—"

"Did you, uh. End up figuring out the issue with that big order? For Maxwell & Co.?" Shane asked quickly. He still wasn't looking at Ilya as he said it.

"Yes," Ilya said, his posture stiffening.

"Because that needs to go out by tonight."

Ilya was having a very difficult time giving a shit about Maxwell & Co., or their order at the moment.

"I know. I took care of it this morning."

"Okay. Good."

"Okay. Good," Ilya repeated. "Can we—"

"Hey," Hayden said as he entered the room, and Ilya almost yelled to the heavens. "Have you two pulled a name for Secret Santa yet?"

"No," Ilya said irritably. Hayden Pike was the world's biggest cockblock. He was also wearing a Santa hat that was too small for his head. He looked fucking ridiculous.

"Not yet," Shane said, and reached into the bag Hayden was offering to him. He pulled a name and looked at it quickly before shoving it into his pocket.

Ilya reached in and pulled out a slip of paper, still staring at the hat on Hayden's head. "Did you take that from a child?" he asked, nodding toward it.

Hayden gave him a grumpy, un-festive look in response. "No. Of course not."

Ilya chuckled and unfolded the paper he'd chosen, his eyes widening when he saw the name written on it.

Shane Hollander.

He quickly schooled his expression despite the rush of pure elation coursing through him.

This felt like fate. A sign, or whatever the fuck.

“Did you get yourself?” Hayden asked. “You have to redraw if you did, Rozanov. We can’t have a repeat of last year.”

“How was I supposed to know rules to stupid North American game if no one explained to me?” Ilya shot back at him. “Besides, I gave myself exactly what I wanted.”

“You brought alcohol onto company property,” Hayden said through gritted teeth. “And then *drank* it.

“I shared.”

“That’s not the point!”

“It was the most interesting thing that has happened in this place, maybe ever,” Ilya shrugged. “You are welcome for making your party less boring.”

Shane let out a breathy chuckle from beside them, and the sound made Ilya feel lighter.

Hayden let out a long sigh and gave Shane a pointed look, as though they were sharing a secret, before walking out of the room.

Ilya smirked. The risk of one day losing his job did not outweigh the enjoyment he got from fucking with Hayden. Maybe it wouldn’t be the worst thing if Ilya lost his job one day. Maybe he could find something he liked better.

“He’s one minor inconvenience away from trying to have you fired,” Shane said as though reading Ilya’s mind.

“He can try,” Ilya said. “Our customer experience scores are higher since I got here.”

“It’s because you flirt with everyone you talk to,” Shane muttered.

Ilya’s head snapped over to Shane, who had buried his face deeper into his salad.

Fuck. Was he *jealous*? The thought shouldn’t have made Ilya as giddy as it did.

“I did not realize you knew how flirting works, Hollander,” Ilya said, opening his can of Coke and turning his body towards him.

“What’s *that* supposed to mean?”

“Just. I think if someone was flirting with you, you would have no idea.”

“Are you calling me *stupid*?”

Ilya chuckled. He leaned over the table close enough so Shane was forced to look him in the eye.

“I am *saying* maybe you need to be more mindful.”

Shane swallowed thickly, his eyes flickering down to Ilya’s lips quickly, his mouth parted. He looked back up at Ilya with wide eyes.

Ilya winked and stood up straight. He moved to walk out of the room before he could do something stupid, like allow the moment to escalate in the middle of the lunch room.

“When did you learn that word?” Shane called from behind him.

Ilya smiled all the way to his desk.

If Shane still didn’t get the message, then Ilya now had the answer to telling him exactly how he felt, clutched tightly in his hand.

He just needed to figure out how.

The first two weeks of December had flown by. Shane hadn’t realized it until he looked at his calendar and realized their staff Christmas party was the following day. Everything had been such a blur, Shane hardly remembered how he spent his nights—certainly not shopping for Christmas presents or doing anything for himself.

The Christmas party was usually held in the office to cut costs. Shane always thought it was a bit stingy—everyone worked so hard all year, the least the company could do was splurge a bit for their employees at the end of the year.

The food was pretty good, and there was a Christmas tree in the corner of the room, so there was that, at least. Shane had put on an oversized red sweater in an attempt to get into the spirit of the thing; some people were wearing ugly sweaters and Santa hats as Christmas music hummed quietly in the background. It was nice.

Shane stood with a group of his co-workers, trying to make small talk. He couldn’t help glancing around every few minutes. He hadn’t seen Ilya all night. Maybe he’d decided not to come.

Maybe he was off somewhere trying to find the best time to spike the punch bowl.

About halfway through the party, the staff all gathered around the tree to listen to Hayden explain the rules to their secret Santa.

“Shane, you can go first,” Hayden said, tossing Shane the present that had his name on it.

It was wrapped in paper with small hockey sticks on it. Shane shook the box. It felt empty, there was no weight to it at all.

Maybe his secret Santa had forgotten and had just put a twenty-dollar bill in there. That wouldn't be the worst thing. At least then, he wouldn't have to pretend he liked some random knick-knack he'd probably just shove in a drawer and never use.

Shane carefully unwrapped the present and opened the box. There was nothing except a tiny slip of paper taped to the bottom of the box.

His spine straightened. He'd recognized that handwriting anywhere.

"1410," the note said.

A room number.

Shane knew that room. He'd never forget it.

It was the one he and Ilya had met in, before Shane had been instructed to give him a tour on his first day.

He felt all the air leave his lungs. He peered around the room quickly; his co-workers had seemingly lost interest in what he'd gotten and had moved on to the next person.

Shane still didn't see Ilya anywhere. That must mean...

Shane slipped out of the room and into the elevator.

Ilya was leaning up against the conference room table when Shane walked in. He *smiled* at Shane. Not the mocking smirk Shane had grown accustomed to seeing flashed in his direction, a genuine smile. Almost nervous. There was a storage box on the table next to him. It wasn't wrapped, but it had a red bow on top.

"Hi," Ilya said, pulling Shane's focus back to him.

"Hi," Shane said, warily.

His unsure tone must have made Ilya laugh.

"Is that..."

"Your gift?" Ilya finished. "Sure. If you want it to be."

"Cryptic," Shane said. "It was a yes or no question."

"Open it," Ilya instructed.

Shane crossed the room and stood in front of it. Ilya was mere inches from him, leaning with his arms crossed on the table. They were close enough that Shane could smell him, a mixture of cologne and cigarettes. They'd had a few back-and-forths over the last year about Ilya smoking, with Ilya promising he'd try to quit. Shane almost wanted to bring it up again just so they were talking about something.

Instead, he eyed the box hesitantly. “Is something going to jump out?”

“Jump out?” Ilya repeated, his brows furrowed.

“Like. Are you trying to prank me?”

“If I wanted to prank you, don’t you think I would have done it in front of people?”

That was a good point.

Slowly, Shane lifted the lid off the box and looked inside.

It was...office supplies.

A lot of it.

Shane blinked down at it, trying to make it all register.

Ilya had gotten him *office supplies*. He’d probably gone to the supplies room at the end of the hall, thrown a bunch of random shit into a box—a *stolen* box, mind you—and packaged it up with a nice little bow on top.

Shane had no idea what to think. This was *obviously* a prank, and not a funny one.

But then he spotted it. A stapler at the bottom of the box, a label that said, ‘Shane Hollander’ was stuck onto the top. Shane exhaled, releasing all of the tension in his body.

This wasn’t just any office supplies, this was...

“What is this?” Shane asked, needing to be sure.

“You know what it is, Hollander,” Ilya said softly, in a voice that Shane had never heard him speak in.

Shane shuffled through the box again—pens, rulers, an extra mouse, sticky notes, a jar of paper clips.

“You’re giving me back all the office supplies you—you borrowed from me.”

“I am showing you I never needed it.”

“Then why did you—why did you ask all the time?”

Ilya looked skyward, covering his face with his hand. “Really, Hollander?”

Oh.

Oh.

The realization hit him as though he’d just been winded.

Shane put the ruler and stapler back into the box and slowly walked over to where Ilya was still leaning on the table. Ilya was looking at him nervously, as though he wasn't sure how Shane was going to take this—as though he had no idea how mutual the feeling apparently was.

They were both so fucking dumb.

Shane closed the gap between them and got into Ilya's space.

Ilya's eyes softened, and he placed a hand on the side of Shane's face, tentatively, his thumb caressing his cheek. Ilya smiled at him in a way that made Shane feel dizzy, and then he attached their lips together.

Ilya kissed him slowly and deliberately. It was everything Shane assumed a first kiss with someone was supposed to feel like, but more, somehow.

The way Ilya was holding his face in his hands—like he was *important*—made him weak at the knees. He'd never been held like this before; he'd never been kissed like this before, not even close.

Ilya sat back onto the table, pulling Shane to stand between his parted thighs, his hands falling to his waist. Ilya stared at him a moment, his eyes dropping to Shane's bottom lip. He leaned in and captured it in his mouth, biting at it teasingly before letting it go again. Shane let out a broken whimper, and Ilya gave him a crooked smile. Shane grabbed the back of his head and brought their mouths together again, his tongue slipping into Ilya's mouth.

The kiss turned heated quickly, Shane pulled on the curls at the back of Ilya's head, as Ilya slipped a wandering hand under Shane's sweater, the ghost of a touch on his back.

He felt himself getting hard against Ilya's thigh, which was *so* fucking embarrassing. Ilya either didn't notice or chose not to comment. He just pulled Shane closer and kissed him harder, moaning with every pass of Shane's tongue in his mouth.

Shane couldn't believe it. He was fully making out with Ilya Rozanov in the room they'd met in nearly a year ago. From thinking he had an unrequited crush on his co-worker, to *this*. He didn't ever want this moment to end.

Ilya couldn't fucking believe he was kissing Shane Hollander.

He couldn't believe Shane Hollander was tugging his hair, that his tongue was in Ilya's mouth.

Most of all, though, he couldn't believe that Shane liked him back—or seemed to, if the way he could feel him growing hard against his leg was any indication. He had no idea what he was expecting when he'd formulated the plan to get Shane up into the room they'd met in. He had no idea if Shane even *remembered* it was the room they'd met in. For all Ilya knew, Shane could have chosen not to come to the room at all.

Ilya had a feeling he would come, but still, this was way better than the best-case scenario that he'd dreamed up in his mind.

They broke apart for air, and Ilya began kissing Shane's neck, pulling him impossibly closer by his waist. Ilya was fucking obsessed, his scent was intoxicating, and he needed more of Shane in every way.

"I thought—I thought you were just fucking with me," Shane said in a strained voice.

"Asking for my stuff."

"You are very oblivious."

"Well, it's not like you made it—*fuck*—obvious."

"I stole your pens." Ilya's voice was muffled in his neck. "I needed reason to talk to you, and you are adorable when you are upset."

"I am *not*."

"I also made mistakes on reports so you would come to my desk and explain what I did wrong."

"But—"

"You like telling people when they are wrong. You like being right. It was romantic, I thought."

"I do *not*—"

"Hollander," Ilya sighed, pulling back.

"And you only ever call me Hollander," Shane said stubbornly. "That's another thing."

"*Shane*," Ilya said, and smiled at how quickly Shane's eyes softened. "I will call you whatever you want if you stop talking and let me blow you."

Shane's breath hitched, his eyes widening.

"Do you want that?" Ilya asked, his thumb caressing his cheek.

Shane nodded weakly. "Here?"

Good point. Ilya didn't want Shane for the first time in a conference room with their co-workers a few floors down. He had waited a year, he could wait another hour.

"My place is close," Ilya said.

Shane backed up three paces, straightening out his sweater and running a hand through his hair.

"Let's go," he said.

“Oh, are you done with party already?” Ilya said, biting his lip and trying to keep his smile at bay.

“Suddenly, very done with it, yeah.”

They’d barely made it through the door and kicked off their shoes before Ilya had Shane up against a wall.

He couldn’t believe Shane was in his apartment. After all the time he’d spent thinking about this moment, hoping that one day he’d get to experience it, it was finally happening. He wanted to take it all in, but it was hard when Shane was looking at him with so much want and the same desperation that Ilya had been feeling for a year now.

Ilya kissed him, pulling a soft noise from the back of Shane’s throat.

“What do you want?” Ilya asked, their foreheads resting against each other.

“You,” Shane replied, almost mindlessly.

Ilya smiled. “You have me.”

Shane smiled at that, his expression softening.

Ilya reached down and cupped Shane over his pants. He was already half hard. “Is this okay?”

Shane bit his bottom lip and nodded, his eyes fixated on Ilya’s mouth. Ilya chuckled and leaned in.

It was different than it had been back at the office, fistfuls of clothing and unapologetic noises leaving their lips.

It wasn’t until Shane was pushing his hips into Ilya’s palm, the sounds he was making getting louder, that he pulled Shane into his apartment and towards his bedroom.

Ilya lightly pushed Shane onto the bed, who landed with a bounce. He took off his own shirt and threw it aside.

Shane swore under his breath as his eyes raked over Ilya’s body.

“You are wearing too many clothes,” Ilya commented as he got onto the bed.

Shane chuckled and pulled his own sweater off. He folded it neatly on his lap and placed it on the opposite side of the bed. Ilya felt a tug in the center of his chest as he watched him. It was foreign, and it hit him like a bolt of lightning. He didn’t know what to do with it. But it was pure, and light, and *good*.

He grinned at Shane as he settled on his back again, propping himself up on his elbows so he could look at Ilya.

“What?” he asked, almost nervously.

Ilya just shook his head and settled in between Shane’s parted thighs. He reached for his belt buckle and looked up at him, an eyebrow raised.

Shane nodded eagerly, and Ilya undid it, flicked open his button, the zipper, and pulled his pants and underwear off.

He stared at the sight in front of him for a moment. “Fucking gorgeous,” Ilya muttered in Russian, and then he took Shane into his mouth, not wanting to waste another second.

“Fuck, Ilya,” Shane gasped, his hand finding Ilya’s hair immediately, as though to anchor himself.

Ilya bobbed his head quickly, his tongue working over the head as Shane’s breathing became shallower above him, incoherent words and lines of expletives filling the otherwise quiet space around them. Ilya hummed in agreement, his hands running up and down Shane’s legs soothingly.

It only took a minute of a vigorous pace until Shane’s back was arching off the bed as he came undone, Ilya’s name on his lips.

Ilya planted kisses to his inner thighs as Shane caught his breath, and then he was being hauled up into a hard, passionate kiss. Ilya smiled into it, he couldn’t help it.

Then Shane was pushing Ilya onto his back, changing their positions, and slotting himself in between Ilya’s legs.

Ilya already knew he wasn’t going to last long. He was already so worked up, and Shane had barely touched him. If Shane noticed how hard Ilya was, he didn’t say anything about it, he pulled his pants down to his mid-thighs and mouthed at the outline of the bulge in his underwear. Ilya let out a broken exhale. *Fuck* he was so hot.

Shane grinned, as though he could hear Ilya’s thoughts—or maybe Ilya had said it out loud—he lowered his underwear and took Ilya in his mouth to eagerly return the favour.

Ilya’s mouth fell open, his eyes screwing shut. He was torn between wanting to watch and knowing that doing so would make him come faster.

“Yes, like that, Shane. *Fuck*, ” Ilya groaned, his fingers carding through Shane’s hair.

Shane sped up his movements, determinedly, glancing up at Ilya through glassy eyes as though he didn’t want to miss a second. A few minutes later, Ilya was swearing profusely—in Russian, mostly, and grabbing at Shane’s hair in warning.

Afterwards, they lay next to each other, staring up at the ceiling as their heavy breathing subsided.

“This is going to be an HR nightmare,” was the first thing out of Shane’s mouth.

“I am already HR nightmare.”

Shane snorted.

Ilya rolled over and kissed Shane’s shoulder, then his neck. He rested his chin on his bicep and peered up at him. He looked fucking breathtaking like this, his hair dishevelled, eyes dark and half-lidded, a lazy, satisfied smile on his face.

He looked relaxed, which seemed like a rarity. He was so used to seeing Shane on edge at work. He had always secretly wondered what he was like outside the concrete walls of their building. Ilya felt lucky he got to experience Shane like this. He seemed happy, and not like he had the weight of the world on his shoulders.

Ilya couldn’t stop looking at him.

Shane glanced back at him, shyly, running his fingers through Ilya’s curls.

“That was...” Shane said.

“Good?” Ilya asked.

“Incredible.”

“Yes,” Ilya agreed. “You sounded like you were enjoying yourself.”

“Shut up,” Shane laughed, and Ilya kissed his chest as an apology.

“I’ve wanted that for a while,” Shane said quietly. “I’ve, uhm. I’ve *liked* you. For a while.” He didn’t look Ilya directly in the eye as he said it.

“Yes,” Ilya said. “Me too.”

“For how long?”

“Since...the first day. Since you gave me tour and I wasn’t listening to anything you said because I was too distracted by your stupid freckles.”

“My *freckles*?”

“Yes. I might be obsessed with them,” Ilya said, running his thumb along Shane’s cheek, and smiling at how quickly Shane blushed. He couldn’t believe he could just...do that now.

“Why? I hate them.”

“Shut up,” Ilya said immediately. “I love them. They are stunning.”

“*Stunning*?”

“Yes,” Ilya said, kissing his cheek for emphasis.

Shane smiled and covered his face with his arms.

“What?” Ilya laughed.

“Nothing,” Shane said, his voice muffled. “I’m just...I’ve liked you since I first met you, too. I didn’t think you’d ever...I felt like such an idiot for having these feelings for my co-worker, but now I feel like an idiot for a whole different reason.”

“Is okay,” Ilya shook his head. “We were both idiots.”

Shane hummed in agreement and laced their fingers together.

“Hey. Was, uh. Was the office supplies my gift?” Shane asked.

“Hm?”

“Secret Santa?”

“Ah,” Ilya smiled. “I’m sorry. Was blowjob not enough?”

Shane swatted him in the arm and laughed.

“Of course not, Hollander,” Ilya said, shaking his head. “I am not asshole.”

“Well—”

“Hey! You like me.”

Shane grinned. “Not if you didn’t get me anything.”

Ilya got up, pulled on his pants and then crossed the room and over to his messenger bag, and pulled out the present he’d spent way too much time wrapping.

“I went over twenty-dollar limit a little,” Ilya admitted when he handed Shane the box.

“Sorry.” He was not.

“Wait,” Shane said, worrying his lip. He was so fucking cute. “Why did you do that? I can’t—I can’t accept this.”

Ilya gave him an incredulous look. “You don’t even know what it is, Hollander. Open it. Please.”

Shane carefully unwrapped the gift, and Ilya chuckled as he watched him fold the paper as though he was going to reuse it afterwards.

He opened the lid to the box and gasped as he pulled out two tickets to the light festival in Old Montreal, the one Shane had told him about weeks ago.

Shane looked up at him, a light flush on his cheeks. He looked a mixture of shocked and incredibly touched.

“I want to do all of those Christmas things you say you have no time for,” Ilya told him, smiling at Shane’s surprised face. “What?”

“I didn’t think you would remember that.”

“You do not think I would remember something you told me three weeks ago?”

“No,” Shane shook his head. “That you’d care enough about something *I* said to remember it.”

“I care,” Ilya said. “Maybe too much.”

“Me too.”

“Good. We both care,” Ilya said. “Now will you go on date with me or not?”

“Yes,” Shane answered. He leaned in and kissed him hard.

“It will be best Christmas of your life,” Ilya said against his lips. “We still have two weeks.”

“Thank you,” Shane whispered, genuinely. There was so much gratitude and affection in his expression. It filled Ilya with so much happiness.

“Ilya?”

“Shane?”

“Does this mean you’ll stop taking my office supplies?”

Ilya burst out laughing, hiding his face in Shane’s neck. He couldn’t believe that was what Shane was concerned about. It was so fucking endearing.

“If it will make you happy,” Ilya responded, kissing the tip of his nose. “I already got what I wanted, anyway.”

“Fuck off,” Shane groaned. “*God*. Stop being so perfect.”

“I will try. Is hard for me, though.”

Shane laughed, and then Ilya was being pushed onto his back, and Shane was on top of him, straddling his hips. He had a shy look on his face as his eyes flickered over Ilya’s body.

“God, you’re so fucking hot,” he whispered, seemingly more to himself than anything else.

Ilya smiled and folded an arm behind his head. “Yeah? Show me.”

Shane did.

Ilya had insisted on picking Shane up from his apartment on the night of their date. He'd knocked on his door dressed in a toque and long jacket, and kissed him hello. He smiled at him in a way that made Shane weak at the knees.

Shane had been on dates with men before. But it only took him a second after he'd opened the door to come to the conclusion that none of them would even come close to this one.

"Were you smoking?" Shane had asked when they broke apart.

"Yes," Ilya replied, rolling his eyes. "Was nervous."

"Why? It's just me."

Ilya had looked him dead in the eye, with all the conviction in the world and said, "Yes. Exactly."

They took a brief detour into Shane's apartment after that.

Now, Ilya was holding Shane's hand as they wandered through rows of light displays, and Shane was pretty sure he'd never felt more content in his life.

He felt Ilya's eyes on him every once in a while, as though he was checking to make sure Shane was enjoying himself.

"Having fun?" he asked, once they'd gone through a long tunnel of white lights.

Shane nodded. "I think they changed the display around. It's even prettier than I remember it."

"Yes. It is very pretty." He was staring at Shane as he said it.

"You need to be stopped," Shane said. If it weren't so cold outside, his cheeks would be bright red for a different reason.

"Why?"

"You can't just *say* things like that."

"Why?" Ilya asked again, brushing his thumb along Shane's cheek. "Because it makes you blush like teenager?"

"I am *not* blushing. It's cold outside."

"Hm. Maybe I *am* loverboy," Ilya said with a shrug.

"A lover—who taught you that word?"

"Hayden Pike from HR," Ilya replied, a slight grimace on his face. "After he cornered me in the lunch room and asked me what my 'intentions' with you were. I think he thought he was being scary."

Shane shook his head. “Sorry, so. He said you were a *loverboy* based on what?”

“I tell him about date. He seemed surprised I had put so much thought into it. I said is bare minimum, and you deserve the world.”

Shane hid his face into Ilya’s shoulder—he had to, he couldn’t look at him. He heard Ilya chuckle, and then his arms were wrapping around him.

“Come on. I want hot chocolate,” he said softly into Shane’s hair.

“I’m buying.”

“You can try.”

In the end, Shane beat Ilya by tapping his credit card on the machine first. Ilya looked at him with a faux angry expression.

Then Ilya pulled him in for a kiss, and they definitely looked like that annoying couple that everyone couldn’t stand to be around.

Except they weren’t. Not technically. It dawned on Shane that they hadn’t had *that* conversation yet.

It also dawned on him that his brain wasn’t going to let him continue to enjoy himself if he didn’t ask.

“Are we like, together?” Shane blurted out after they’d found a stand-up table near the hot chocolate booth. He cringed hard at himself.

“Right now? Yes. See?” Ilya held up their conjoined hands.

“I meant. Like. Are we a couple?”

“Oh,” Ilya said, his brows furrowing. “Are you really asking what we are right now?” He sounded amused.

“I don’t know!” Shane said he suddenly felt embarrassed. “Dating today is...complicated.”

“This isn’t,” Ilya said. “This is the most uncomplicated thing ever.” He held their hands up again, and Shane laughed. He was right. After they’d admitted their feelings to one another, Shane had never been a part of anything so effortless.

“Okay, so...together then,” Shane asked, carefully.

“Are you asking me to be your boyfriend, Shane Hollander?”

Shane rolled his eyes. “Yes.”

“Okay. Let’s go see Santa, *boyfriend*,” Ilya said jokingly, nodding towards the hut across from them labelled *Santa’s House*. “We will need a photo for joint Christmas card we will

send out. Troy and Harris sent me one this year with Chiron. Was adorable.”

Shane chuckled as Ilya pulled him into the long line; his heart had never felt fuller.

End Notes

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