change your ticket

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by lupus (lupuswrites)

Summary

Under the guidance of his doctor and mostly out of desperation due to his last annual heat being severe enough to nearly land him in the hospital, Shane Hollander knows he needs to take a heat partner for the first time if he doesn't want to end up in a cycle facility.
With his options between hiring a comfort alpha or asking one Ilya Rozanov for help, the choice is clear to Shane. Even if it feels like he's losing every shred of his dignity to ask his - rival? fuckbuddy? - whatever Rozanov is to help him through his heat, Rozanov is the only alpha he trusts enough to take care of him.
Rozanov is due for his own rut and is more than happy to finally, finally have heat sex with Hollander. Which is why he says yes with no hesitation. No other reason, of course.
Now they both just need to survive the week with their hearts intact, which is something far easier said than done.

Notes

heard yall wanted more omega shane hollander and im nothing if not a woman of the people! omegaverse is my guilty pleasure i fear (will not be self-analyzing too deeply into that one). anyway this is all pretty much just straight up porn with some fluff thrown in so enjoy!

This is set late June 2016 so before the prologue of the book / tuna melts /etc. Aka they're about to speed run all that intimacy in a week. This will follow more of the canon from the show just to be more accessible to everyone :)

(also i was on the fence about even posting this but then there was that joke in 1.04 about getting shane pregnant so it felt like a divine ordinance from the yaoi gods to pull trig on this one)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

fic title from “change your ticket” by one direction

June 2016.

Ilya was lounging on his couch in Boston, simultaneously dreading and procrastinating preparing for his flight to Moscow next week, when his phone rang.

He almost ignored it. The only people who really called him were his brother and his father and he had no interest in speaking to either of them right now. All his brother ever wanted was money. And even with his worsening memory, his father still found ways to berate him from the other side of the world. He didn’t want to hear about how he didn’t win the cup this year. How he wasn’t even nominated for MVP. Both had gone to Shane Hollander.

For the second year in a row.

He decided to take a peek at the caller ID, just in case it was someone else or something actually important. When he did check, he nearly missed the call altogether because it was the last name he ever expected to come across his screen as a call.

Jane.

Ilya froze. Hollander had never called him before. Not once in their entire arrangement. Ilya pressed the “answer” button as soon as what was happening registered with him. If he missed this call, there was no way Hollander would call him a second time.

“Hello?”

“Hey. It’s uh, it’s Shane. Shane Hollander,” Hollander clarified nervously on the other line.

“Yes, Hollander. I have caller ID,” Ilya said, refusing to let how endeared he was by Hollander introducing himself with his first and last name in that charmingly awkward way of his.

“Oh yeah. Duh,” Hollander huffed. “Sorry, my brain is a little scrambled today.”

“So what is this? Butt dial? Did you call to gloat about winning MVP?”

“What? No. I…I called to ask a favor,” Hollander said quietly.

Ilya sat up on his couch, intrigued.

“A favor.”

Hollander paused for a moment before continuing carefully.

“Do you remember, years ago, when you offered to share my heat with me? And when I declined, you said to let you know if I ever changed my mind?” Hollander asked.

“Hmm, I sort of recall,” Ilya said, trying to keep the hopeful excitement out of his voice.

“Please don’t make this harder than it has to be,” Hollander sighed. “I’m asking if you’d be my heat partner this summer. If the offer still stands.”

Ilya could hear the stress simmering beneath the surface in Hollander’s voice, and if he was finally coming to Ilya after years of him offering, he must be pretty desperate.

“Yes, Hollander. Offer still stands,” Ilya said.

Hollander gave a sigh of relief on the other end of the line. He wondered what happened to Hollander’s Montreal heat partner. Maybe something came up. It didn’t matter, that idiot’s loss was Ilya’s gain.

“When will it start?” Ilya asked before Hollander had the chance to say anything else.

“Five days,” Hollander said. “I know it’s short notice -“

“Is fine,” Ilya said. “I’ll be there in four to make sure I can get to you by the evening beforehand so we have time to settle in.”

“I’ll send you all the details - the address and everything. And um, I can pick you up at the airport if you need -“

“I will get rental. I will not make you drive to the airport in preheat,” Ilya cut him off.

“Oh, yeah,” Hollander said. “Probably a good call.”

There was a brief, awkward silence before Ilya cleared his throat.

“Well then. I will see you soon.”

“Yeah. Okay,” Hollander said, sounding like he was nearly in disbelief that Ilya was agreeing to this. Like Ilya would ever say no to the very thing he’d been fantasizing about for years.

“I’ll send you all the details about how to get here in a bit,” Shane continued.

“Okay. I’ll send all my flight info once I book everything.”

“Sounds good,” Shane replied. “And uh, Rozanov?”

Ilya hummed in answer.

“Thank you. Really. I mean it.”

He could hear the sincerity and the relief so clearly in Hollander’s voice.

“Is no problem, Hollander,” he replied softly.

They hung up, and very shortly after, Shane sent his cottage’s address as well as the best airport to fly into. He also sent a reminder of the day his heat was supposed to start. Like Ilya hadn’t already cemented it into his brain.

He all but leaped off the couch, feeling energized and actualized in the way he did when he felt useful and needed. He wasn’t sure if that was an alpha thing or just a him thing. Either way, he was probably more excited than he’d like to admit about the prospect of sharing a heat with Shane Hollander. In the almost six years that they’d been hooking up, they’d never once shared a cycle. Not Hollander’s heat, not Ilya’s rut.

It was a fluke that Ilya even knew that Hollander was an omega. Laws in both Canada and the United States prevented the MLH and other sports leagues from forcing players to disclose their assignations, but it was strongly encouraged if the player was anything other than a beta.

Alphas, and the rare omegas in the league, had to be on both suppressants and scent blockers during the season. Because the league couldn’t legally require its players to disclose if they were following those rules, most teams typically just randomly tested to check for balanced hormone levels, in a similar vein to random drug testing.

Hollander was unlisted, which usually just meant beta. Hell, if Ilya didn’t have such intimate familiarity of Hollander’s body, he never would’ve suspected he was anything else.

How wet he got for Ilya - even on suppressants and outside of heat - and how beautifully he followed directions said otherwise. It only added to their compatibility in the bedroom, too. And Ilya would be lying if he hadn’t thought about what it would be like to share Hollander’s heat. Especially what it would be like to share Hollander’s heat alongside Ilya’s own rut.

The first, and last, time he’d offered to help Hollander through his heat had been at the fateful MLH Awards in 2011. They’d fought on the rooftop, and the next thing Ilya knew, he had Hollander pressed up against the wall, and they were kissing each other with equal desperation.

It was as Hollander was pushing him away, berating him for kissing him in public, that Ilya caught the scent.

“You are an omega,” Ilya whispered.

Hollander’s face had morphed from anger and disbelief to pure terror.

“You can’t tell anyone.”

“I would not do that,” Ilya said, seriously. He meant it. “Why can I smell you?”

“I started to taper off my suppressants this week so that I can time my heat right,” Hollander explained.

Ilya understood that. He always stopped his own suppressants in time to have a quick rut before he went back to Russia for the summer. He felt safer at his place in Boston than he did anywhere else back home.

“Though normally it takes a few days before anyone can smell me,” Hollander continued curiously.

“Hmmm. So you will have heat soon. Need a partner?” Ilya said it with a teasing tone so he could hide how serious he was about his offer.

“Fuck off,” Hollander said.

“Am serious,” Ilya said.

“I’m all set. But thank you.”

Even in the dim light of the rooftop, Ilya could see the flush on Hollander’s cheeks. The implication of Hollander being “all set” stoked a flare of jealousy in him.

Did Hollander have someone else lined up back in Montreal? Or maybe even back home in Ottawa? He tried to douse the jealousy as soon as it arose, though, blaming it on stupid alpha instincts and his own overdue rut. It was none of his business who Shane Hollander spent his heats with.

“Well. If you ever change your mind, or want some heat company, you have my number,” Ilya winked.

“I’ll be sure to keep that in mind,” Hollander replied dryly.

He’d left Ilya on the roof alone to mull over the startling amount of new information. Now that Ilya had all the pieces, it made sense to him. It also explained why Hollander had been so hesitant to do anything beyond blowjobs with him. If Ilya were to fuck him, it would be *very* clear that Hollander was an omega, suppressants or not.

Now, five years later, he was intimately familiar with Hollander’s body. Their sex was already so good, so intense, he knew that sharing a cycle would be very pleasurable for both of them.

He didn’t let himself linger too long on the added intimacy that heat would bring them. The sheer number of lines they were about to cross together that they’d never crossed before. He shoved those thoughts down deep, locking them away with the other Hollander-related thoughts he’d been having for quite some time now.

Like how he’d been checking his phone more than ever in the last few months. Like how excited he got when he saw a text from *Jane* in his notifications, as sparing as they were. Like how the last time he’d gone out with Svetlana, he’d completely blown off a *very*

beautiful woman who'd made a pass at him and had spent the entire night wondering what Hollander was up to.

He buried all of it, refusing to let himself overthink this or refuse a very pretty, bow-wrapped gift from the universe just because of his worsening…fixation on Hollander.

It was perfect timing. He had been planning to stop taking his own suppressants that night, and he'd already stopped taking his scent blockers once the Raiders were booted from the playoffs. His ruts were very quick and straightforward, following the same pattern every year once he stopped his suppressants. One day in between, and then three days of rut, and he was done for the year.

He knew alphas had it far easier, comparatively. Even if they also generally happened annually for those on suppressants, omega's heats typically lasted around a week. And while ruts could easily be ridden out alone, going through a heat alone was a pretty miserable experience. Even borderline dangerous sometimes, depending on how severe the omega's heat was. It was probably why Hollander was so desperate, then so relieved when Ilya said yes.

Ilya had helped a few omegas through their heats here and there. Not as often as his playboy reputation would have people think, mostly just because full weeks off were few and far between outside the summer in his profession.

Still, he knew what he was doing, and he knew how to make heats good for his partners. He would make this the best heat Hollander ever had. He'd make him forget about whatever other alpha he'd been seeing every summer and have him wondering why he didn't take Ilya's offer sooner.

He started compiling a list of things he needed to do in the three short days before his flight. Some of it would have to wait until he was there, things like groceries, but most of it he'd be able to get done prior to leaving.

First, and most importantly, he had a plane ticket to change.

"I think you should really consider taking a partner this heat," Shane's doctor said, looking at his chart on her laptop.

She'd been his cycle doctor since his rookie year, when he first moved to Montreal. She was about his mom's age and had the exact bedside manner Shane needed - direct and no-nonsense, but always with an undercurrent of empathy and understanding. He'd been very lucky to find her.

He had her to thank for how well controlled his heat and scent were during the hockey season, she'd worked with him to find the right scent blockers and suppressants that

performed best with the demands of being a pro athlete. He trusted her nearly implicitly.

Which is why he knew she was right.

“I know you prefer to cycle alone,” she continued. “Your last one was very severe and lasted nearly ten days. That’s not normal, Shane. If it worsens again this year, you could wind up hospitalized.”

“I know,” Shane replied quietly.

He’d never particularly enjoyed his heats. They always made him feel vulnerable and out of control. They’d been getting progressively worse as of late, and Shane had grown from feeling inconvenienced by them to dreading them. He typically tried to get them out of the way as soon as possible, spending the week tucked away in his cabin, so that he could enjoy the rest of his summer without an impending heat looming over his head.

“They’ve been getting worse each year. It could be the stress of your job, it could be that your body is confused by the fact that you don’t share a heat with an alpha you sleep with otherwise.”

There was no judgment in her tone, it was simply clinical, like she was trying to solve a puzzle. She knew that Shane had an occasional sexual partner, who just so happened to be an alpha. She obviously didn’t know *who,* of course, but after he and Rozanov had started sleeping together, he’d needed a dosage change, and so the cat was out of the bag.

“If you’re not interested in having sex with someone else during your heat - which is totally fine and normal and completely *your* choice - I would suggest at the very least a comfort alpha to ease the symptoms and make sure you’re taken care of. Or intervene if need be before things get as bad as they did last time.”

She used her rolling chair to glide across the room, plucking a pamphlet from the counter against the far wall.

“There are plenty of programs, all protected by the Designation Privacy Act, that all employ trusted and well-vetted alphas. Or even betas and omegas if that’s more your speed, though with your symptoms, an alpha would be best,” she continued, rolling back to hand the pamphlet to Shane. “Unless you have someone in mind. Either way, I’d try to solidify plans by tonight or tomorrow. Judging by your cycle history and your hormone levels, I’d give you about five days, six at the max if you’re lucky.”

Shane sighed heavily and nodded. “Thank you.”

“I know this isn’t easy,” She said gently, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. “And it’s not always fair what our bodies demand of us. I’m thankful that we have the medications available so that most people can get away with one cycle a year. I’m hopeful that one day we’ll have medical advances that could make it possible for us to skip heats and ruts all together. Until then we have to do the best with what we’re given, hm?

“The last thing I want is for you to have to be taken to a Cycle Facility, Shane,” she continued, seriously. “And I know you don’t want that either. I can’t force you to do anything but it’s my professional medical opinion that you should not go through this heat alone.”

“I won’t,” Shane promised. “I’m taking this very seriously.”

“I know you are,” she smiled warmly. “Okay, any further questions?”

Shane shook his head.

“Then I’ll see you at your post-heat appointment. In the meantime, feel free to call the office if anything comes up or if you need any help contacting the agencies. And don’t forget that our hotline is 24/7 if you have any questions or pressing matters during your cycle.”

Shane hardly remembered the drive home. He left for his cottage first thing in the morning, so he knew he needed to solidify his plans by tonight if he didn’t want to spend the entirety of the drive the next day in an anxiety spiral.

He sat at his kitchen island, going through the pamphlets the doctor had given him. A comfort alpha didn’t sound *awful,* but it also wasn’t his ideal solution. He knew what his, and his body’s, ideal solution was.

His thumb hovered over the call button on “Lily’s” contact.

It was going to feel a bit like a humiliation ritual, admitting to Rozanov that he needed help, but for all his teasing, Rozanov had never been cruel to him about anything regarding sex. And he’d never, ever made Shane feel lesser than because of his designation. Plus, Shane already knew how compatible they were in the bedroom. And even if they didn’t always get along, he’d always been able to trust Rozanov enough to let go whenever they were together.

To Shane, heats were a burden. Something to suffer through. Something he felt a lot of shame around. The premise of actually enjoying a heat was equal parts new, exciting, and terrifying.

He’d be lying if he said he hadn’t spent every heat since 2010 imagining that Rozanov was there with him. Shane chalked it up to the fact that it was because he was the only alpha he’d ever had sex with. That’s what he told himself at least so that he wouldn’t so that he didn’t have to read too far into his own heat-induced fantasies.

He steeled a breath, knowing his decision had already been made for him. He made himself a deal. If he called and Rozanov didn’t answer, he’d hire a companion alpha, and that would be that.

Before he could chicken out, he pressed call, tapping his fingers against the granite countertops as the line rang. When get got to four unanswered rings, Shane had resigned himself to his fate and was almost about to hang up. But the fifth ring cut off mid tone, and a deep, familiar voice answered.

“Hello?”

Shane had been pacing around his cottage for probably around the last hour. He'd already cleaned the entire place spotless - something he always did while in preheat, even when he knew he'd be spending his heat alone - and now had nothing else to do to keep himself distracted.

Rozanov had told Shane he'd be getting to the cottage around five and it was nearly fifteen til. He put ESPN on the TV on a low volume, just for some background noise. He wasn't sure if it was five minutes or five hours later that there was a knock on the front door.

When he opened it, Rozanov was there, on his doorstep, carrying at least three bags of groceries in each hand and looking just as irritatingly handsome as he always did.

"Hi," Shane said.

"Hi," Rozanov parroted

Shane still couldn't believe that Rozanov was here. That he'd flown and driven all this way just to be here for Shane's heat. The reality of it hadn't exactly sunken in yet.

After a brief, only slightly awkward pause, Rozanov raised a brow and inclined his head toward the door.

"Oh yeah, sorry," Shane said, taking a step back and opening the door wider. "Come on in."

As Rozanov passed him, Shane got a whiff of the other man's unblocked scent for the first time. It was dizzying. And it was exactly how Shane had always imagined Rozanov would smell. Deep, rich, masculine, with a little hint of spice.

Rozanov either didn't notice or was trying not to humiliate Shane by acknowledging his reaction and simply found his way to the kitchen, placing all six bags on the counter with ease. The sight and smell of him in Shane's house, unpacking groceries that he purchased without Shane even asking so that he could take care of him during his heat was sending his instincts fucking *haywire.*

"You bought groceries," Shane said.

"Yes," Rozanov replied. "I told you, I am good heat partner."

"I, uh, already got some stuff," Shane admitted. Because he had, though certainly nothing to the extent of what Rozanov had gotten.

"This would maybe sustain you if you were alone," Rozanov said, after opening the door to the fridge to survey its contents. "You will need much more food with the amount of energy we will be exerting together."

He didn't even say it in a flirty or taunting way, just matter-of-factly. The fridge contained mostly meal replacement protein shakes that were formulated for heats, waters, and sports

drinks. Shane never had the wherewithal to be able to consume much else by the time he was in the throes of heat.

“What, the other alphas you’ve spent your heats with let you get away with drinking only this shit?” Rozanov asked as he moved to start putting the groceries in the fridge. “They were not very good alphas then.”

“Here, I’ll do that,” Shane interrupted, partially to distract Rozanov from his question but mostly because he was particular about his fridge, especially in heat. “I have a…method. I like my fridge a certain way.”

“Of course you do,” Rozanov said, “Go ahead. I will grab the rest of my stuff from the car.”

Shane got to work unpacking the food. It was a rather thoughtful assortment. Pre-cut fruits, deli meats, and cheeses as well as some pre-made meals, eggs, bacon, and other efficient snacks . Realistically, most of it would all be easy and quick to consume in between rounds of sex. Still, Shane was really never *hungry* while in heat. He only ever drank the meal replacement shakes when he was clear-headed enough to know that he needed to.

He supposed that was the point of having a heat partner, especially an alpha. They not only helped ease the symptoms but their ruts were different than heats. Even if their ruts gave them the strong urge to fuck and knot, any alpha worth their salt would still have caring for their omega partner as their top priority. Beyond sexual gratification, it also included making sure they were fed and cared for. And didn’t end up like Shane almost had the previous summer.

Shane was mostly done putting the food away by the time Rozanov came back, this time with a duffel bag slung over his shoulder and a large suitcase rolling behind him.

“You moving in or something?” Shane asked, eyeing the full-sized suitcase.

“This is mine,” Rozanov said, tugging at the strap of the duffel. “The suitcase is mostly for you. Where is the bedroom?”

Shane gave him directions to the primary suite, wondering what the hell Rozanov meant when he said the suitcase was for him. He hoped it wasn’t full of like…sex toys and stuff. Shane had no idea what else it could be, so he continued to unpack the groceries to keep his hands and mind busy.

He was glad that Rozanov wasn’t around when he got to the end of the very last bag of groceries. Sitting at the bottom were two six-packs of ginger ale. Shane’s favorite brand. How Rozanov knew of his preference for the beverage in general was beyond him. Choosing the brand Shane preferred had to have been a stroke of luck.

He knew that Rozanov could be analytical and observant. It made him an incredible hockey player. Shane just had never expected Rozanov’s perceptions to be aimed at *him*. He also knew, under the cocky veneer, that Rozanov could be thoughtful. Caring. But every time that care was aimed in Shane’s direction it disarmed him, unmoored him. Made him feel off-kilter.

To prevent himself from overthinking or reading too far into it, Shane convinced himself it was just a fluke. Maybe liking ginger ale was some sort of omega thing. Or maybe it was good during heats?

By the time Rozanov was back in the kitchen, Shane had successfully staved off an overthinking spiral but was now faced with the awkward reality of having the other man in his space.

“So. We should probably talk before things…get going,” Shane said.

“Yes,” Rozanov confirmed. “But I will make dinner first. Then we will talk.”

“You want to make me dinner?” Shane asked, unable to keep the cautious disbelief from his voice.

“Is an…alpha thing,” Rozanov said. “I can sense your heat coming, and I want to take care of you. Seriously, what kind of other alphas were you sharing your heat with that they did not make you dinner before your heat? Or buy you groceries?”

And it being an alpha thing made far more sense to Shane than Rozanov wanting to cook for him simply just because.

“Do you need any help?” Shane deflected instead of answering the real question.

“No. Go sit, relax,” Rozanov shooed him out of the kitchen. “I’ve got this.”

“I’m gonna go change while you cook,” Shane said.

Rozanov simply nodded, flicking his hand in a shooing motion once again. Shane fixated on the fact that Rozanov was an asshole for kicking him out of his own kitchen so that he didn’t think to hard about how Rozanov was in his kitchen. Cooking him dinner.

He really did need to change out of his jeans and into something more comfortable - the fabric was starting to irritate his skin - but he also wanted to snoop a little and see what was in the suitcase that Rozanov had apparently brought for him.

Rozanov’s duffle was perched on Shane’s dresser, but the suitcase was placed neatly on the floor. The room already had an undercurrent of Rozanov’s scent. It was trace, but it was there and Shane knew it would only intensify as the week went on.

He knelt on the ground next to the suitcase, unzipping it and flipping the top of it up cautiously, truly unsure of what he would find.

“*Oh*,” he said.

A wave of Rozanov’s scent washed over him. With the exception of what looked like a toiletry bag, the suitcase was filled with neatly folded clothes and blankets. Shane took a sweatshirt from the top, bringing it to his nose and inhaling deeply. It smelled like it had been recently cleaned but was still saturated in Rozanov’s scent.

He successfully resisted the urge to do something stupid, like bury his entire face in the pile of Rozanov-scented fabric, and instead took two of the blankets to add to his bed. He knew once his heat really set in he'd probably throw them right back off, but right now it made his bed feel *complete*.

He yanked his jeans off, breathing a sigh of relief to finally be free of them. He went ahead and stripped out of his underwear too, throwing both in the hamper and changing into a pair of soft, cotton jersey shorts that he knew showed off his thighs.

Not that he was *trying* to show off to Rozanov or anything. He just wanted to feel good. That was it.

He lingered a little longer than was probably necessary in his room as he double checked to make sure everything was in order before his heat inevitably hit. Based on his previous experiences, he'd be out of his mind for the next few days. He wondered idly how much of a difference having an alpha around would really make.

Before leaving the bedroom, and before he could think better of it, he also changed out of his t-shirt and into one of Rozanov's sweatshirts. He allowed himself one more moment of indulgence, bringing the collar of the sweatshirt up so that he could inhale the rich, spicy scent that was so uniquely Rozanov. Of course, he smelled just as incredible as he looked.

It was worth it, for the way Rozanov's eyes tracked him as Shane made his way back into the kitchen, like a predator to prey. Once Shane was close enough, his eyes traced all the way down his body, pausing on his bared thighs, then back up so that their gazes met. Shane could *see* the way Rozanov's chest rose, then fell while he took a deep, measured breath.

"Dinner is almost finished," he said, eyes never leaving Shane's. "Go sit. I will bring you a plate."

Soon enough, Rozanov was walking to the table, two plates and some cutlery in hand.

"Spaghetti, red sauce, ground turkey meatballs," Rozanov said, placing a rather full plate in front of Shane. He placed his own in the seat caddy-corner to Shane's.

"Think you gave me a big enough portion?"

"Carb loading," Rozanov said as he sat. "Like for marathon. This will probably be the last full meal you will eat for some time."

Shane took a few bites of his food to start. It was good. Simple, but good.

"Is good?" Rozanov asked.

Shane nodded. "Yes. Thank you."

They ate in a mostly companionable silence. Shane hadn't realized how hungry he was before he'd started eating, but by the time he was done his plate was nearly cleared.

He looked up to see Rozanov watching him intently.

“So,” Shane started. “We should probably have that talk now.”

Rozanov nodded.

“Anything I should know?” He asked. “Any boundaries?”

“Well, obviously no mating bites,” Shane said. Even if it was obvious, he felt the need to say it.

“Obviously,” Rozanov repeated.

“Everything else is fine. Um. Biting, marking, all that is good because I won’t have to hide it from anyone, like when we normally see each other,” Shane said.

“And you are okay if I knot you?” Rozanov asked casually.

Shane’s cheeks burned. It was something they’d never done before, obviously. They didn’t exactly have time for it, and it was also far too intimate an act for two people in an arrangement such as theirs. Besides, most alphas could only knot during their own rut or if their partner was in heat, so it hadn’t really been a pressing issue before.

“Yes,” Shane replied.

“Still okay with no protection?”

Rozanov’s results had come through the night before - Shane always got his done at his annual appointment - and they were in the clear. Condoms designed specifically for knotting were a thing, and usually, Shane didn’t like the mess, but heats were different.

“Still okay,” Shane confirmed. “And I got my, uh, birth control shot at my last appointment, so you’re in no danger of getting me pregnant.”

“I can still try,” Rozanov said with a wink.

Even if he had no interest in getting pregnant any time soon - he had way too many years of hockey left in him - the idea of Rozanov *trying* to get him pregnant was way hotter than it had any right to be.

“Will I send you into rut?” Shane asked, instead of further dwelling on the idea of Rozanov knocking him up.

“Yes,” Rozanov said resolutely. “But I did bring my suppressants, if you prefer I do not rut. I tend to stay very lucid in my ruts, and they are short. I will not hurt you, Hollander.”

“I trust you,” Shane said. “And besides, you should get something out of this, too.”

“I am about to spend an entire week fucking a very pretty omega over and over and over,” Rozanov said, raising a brow. “I will get something out of this either way.”

Shane flushed. “Well, Jesus. When you put it that way.”

“Do not stress so much, Hollander. I know alphas have it easier with their ruts, but heats should be enjoyable. I know you are like…allergic to fun, but when you are with right partner cycles do not have to be so bad.”

“I don’t know. Heats have never been particularly fun for me,” Shane muttered.

He recognized the admission was a mistake by the way Rozanov stiffened.

“Hollander, what do you mean by that?” Rozanov asked, growing very serious. “I know I have teased you about bad alphas, but did your previous partner hurt you?”

“No, *no!* It’s not like that,” Shane said.

“Then what is it like?”

Well. They needed to have this discussion anyway. Might as well do it now.

“There is no previous partner,” Shane explained. “I’ve never actually shared my heat with anyone.”

Rozanov looked at him like he’d grown an extra head.

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve always just…gone through my heats alone. Ever since I presented as a teenager,” Shane explained. “They’ve been getting progressively worse over the last few years. Last year was…pretty brutal. Ten days. By the end of it I was almost cent to a Cycle Facility, but then the heat broke, and everything was fine.”

“You were almost hospitalized?” Rozanov asked.

“God, *that’s* what you got from all of that?”

“Hollander, that is serious.”

“I *know*,” Shane huffed. “That’s why I asked you here. I can’t go through that again. It was… it was really bad. I know there’s, like, programs or whatever for comfort alphas but I just can’t do that. And you’re the only one I trust enough to ask.”

“Well,” Ilya said, taking Shane’s plate and stacking it on top of his own. “Is good thing I am here to take care of you this time, then, hm?”

Shane rolled his eyes.

“Am serious,” Rozanov continued. “I am glad that you trust me. And I will take very good care of you this week. I will make it good for you, Hollander.”

He stood, but instead of immediately moving away, he bent down to peck Shane lightly on the lips.

“I am happy you called me,” he said seriously before taking the plates toward the kitchen.

Shane was so shocked by the kiss that it took him a moment to catch up.

“Wait!” He called, following after Rozanov.

“What? You are particular about how your dishes are cleaned, too?” Rozanov asked, setting the dirty dishes on the counter and giving Shane an amused grin.

“Just the dishwasher,” Shane muttered. “I have a system.”

“I would expect nothing less,” Rozanov said. “Can I clean the pots and pans, or is there a ‘system’ for those too?”

“Those are fine,” Shane said. Then added in a halfhearted “asshole” as a follow-up for good measure.

After everything was cleaned and the counters and table were wiped down, Shane was starting to feel antsy again. Rozanov picked up on it, of course, and leveled Shane with a serious look.

“Let us make a deal here, hm? I do not want you to feel like you must hide anything or hold back because of our professional lives. This week, in the safety of this cottage, we are just an alpha and an omega cycle sharing. Who we are to each other in the outside world does not matter. Here, we are not rivals. Is just us. Just two people.”

“Yeah,” Shane nodded and breathing a sigh of relief. “I’d like that.”

“Good,” Rozanov murmured. “What do you need from me right now? Some omegas want to be fucked before the heat hits, others don’t want to be touched at all. Some fall right in between.”

Shane grasped for what his body wanted. He was always some undercurrent of turned on when Rozanov was around, but the thought of having sex right now wasn’t appealing. He normally didn’t feel the urge to get himself off for days before his heat. It seemed that it carried over even when he had his insanely hot alpha fuckbuddy in the same room as him

He did feel a little untethered, though. Unsure. He *was*, he realized, craving connection. But even with the agreement they just made, he didn’t know how to ask Rozanov for anything that wasn’t sex. They didn’t…do that under normal circumstances. And while these clearly weren’t normal circumstances, Shane was still a little hesitant.

“Hollander. What do you need from me right now?” Rozanov repeated at Shane’s silence.

“I think I need to be anchored. To be held,” Shane admitted quietly.

“Then we will go to the couch and watch TV. And I will hold you,” Rozanov said, simply.

He placed his hands on Shane’s hips, steering him toward the living room. He grabbed the remote off the coffee table on their way to the couch, then settled himself against the mound

of throw pillows resting on one of the plush couch arms. He spread his legs, patting his thighs in invitation.

Shane settled in between his legs, only somewhat awkwardly, his front to Rozanov. Shane's head settled against his chest, just under Rozanov's chin, and Rozanov wound one arm around him while he used the other to flip through channels, stopping at a sports channel showing a baseball game.

"Baseball is so boring," Rozanov murmured into his hair. "They can't even fight."

He placed the remote somewhere, and his other arm also came to wrap across Shane's back so that he was completely enveloped.

He was practically engulfed in Rozanov - by his body, by his scent. He could faintly hear the steady, comforting *thud* of Rozanov's heart from where his ear pressed against the other man's chest. For the first time since he'd stopped taking his suppressants earlier that week, he no longer felt like he wanted to crawl out of his skin. And for the first time in his life, Shane was cautiously excited for his heat. Rozanov was here. Rozanov would take care of him. Would make him feel *good*.

He had no idea how long he lay there in the alpha's arms, feeling more peaceful than he had in a very long time. He must have fallen asleep at some point because suddenly there was gentle jostling under him, and when he opened his eyes, the TV was no longer on.

"We should get to bed," Rozanov urged, gently. "You will need all the rest you can get before it kicks in.

They untangled themselves from each other and the couch, walking side-by-side to the bedroom.

"I will shower, okay?" Rozanov said as they entered the bedroom together, heading for the en suite.

Shane nodded, only following him into the bathroom to wash his face and brush his teeth once he heard the shower running. Doing his nightly routine while Rozanov showered was a lot more comforting than Shane would've expected. It felt like they had done this a hundred times before.

Still, he finished quicker than he normally would, mostly so he didn't have to deal with the potential awkwardness of standing side-by-side at his double sink with Rozanov, getting ready for bed together like a married couple or something.

The shower cut off shortly after Shane settled into bed. Rozanov popped out of the bathroom just long enough to grab some things from his duffel, then headed back. Shane watched him, shirtless, dripping wet and in only a towel (a sight he'd seen plenty of times before) and stared unabashedly. Even if Shane wasn't feeling particularly horny thanks to his stupid preheat, it didn't mean he couldn't appreciate the view.

Eventually, Rozanov came back out, still shirtless but this time wearing simple black briefs.

“Want me to close the curtains?” Rozanov asked, pointing at the giant floor-to-ceiling windows in the bedroom.

“No, it’s okay. Leave them,” Shane said.

“Ooooh, exhibitionist,” Rozanov teased with his trademark shit-eating grin.

“No, you *asshole*,” Shane could feel himself blushing. “I just like to wake up with the sun.”

“Of course you do,” Rozanov said, mirroring his response to Shane’s peculiarity over his fridge. But this time he said it even softer. He sounded…fond.

“My heats typically kick in mid-day, but with you here and based on how I’m feeling right now…I’ll be lucky to make it til morning,” Shane admitted sheepishly as Rozanov settled into bed beside him.

Shane was thankful Rozanov had the decency not to give him shit for the little nest he’d made with the blankets. He knew it was why Rozanov brought them, and he knew it was instinct, but sometimes even the smallest things about his nature made him a little insecure.

“Good thing I made you carb load then, huh?” Rozanov waggled his brows.

“Shut up,” Shane rolled his eyes.

It was strangely…domestic. All of it. Every moment since Rozanov had walked through his door had been domestic.

Normally, they hardly made it three minutes before tearing at each other's clothes. He realized this was the longest they’d ever spent together at once. Shane was honestly most shocked about how weird it *wasn’t*. It felt strangely natural. Easy. He didn’t always feel this relaxed around other people, especially for extended periods of time. But something about Rozanov had always made him feel like he could just be himself.

Shane started to drift again. A combination of the sheer amount of food he’d eaten for dinner and the strangely comforting presence of Rozanov. He felt safe. He felt cared for. And for the first time, probably ever, he wasn’t a bundle of anxiety the night before his heat.

The last thing he was cognizant of was a murmured “Goodnight, Hollander,” and the click of his bedside lamp before he sank into a dreamless sleep.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> very much blown away by the amount of love on that first chapter. thank you for all the comments and kudos they genuienly always fuel me to write faster. which is why i wrote 11k words in just over a week and had to split this update into two chapters lmfao😭. truly hope this is worth the wait and thanks for tuning in <3

Day One

Ilya woke to the unmistakable smell of an omega in heat and the desperate sounds of Hollander groaning and rutting into the bed beside him.

He flicked on the bedside lamp closest to him, then immediately shifted to run a comforting hand down Hollander's sweaty back. It seems he'd already rid himself of his clothes. Ilya wondered how long he'd been like this, how much of it Ilya had slept through.

f"Hollander," he whispered gently.

"Rozanov. You're here," Hollander murmured, like he couldn't believe it.

It was the most disheveled Ilya had ever seen him. Eyes hazy, hair tousled, and his plush mouth open and panting with need. Hollander was always beautiful, sometimes annoyingly and unfairly so, but he'd never been more beautiful than this very moment.

"I'm here. I will take care of you, yes?"

"Yes," Hollander nodded desperately as he flipped to his back. "*Please*."

Ilya hushed him gently. He slotted himself between Shane's thighs, sitting back on his heels as he ran his hands up Hollander's thighs and took in the incredible sight beneath him.

"I am going to take the edge off before I fuck you," he said as he wrapped a hand around Hollander's rigid cock.

"But I need -"

"*I* know what you need," he rumbled. "And I will give you it."

And *oh,* his rut was certainly being triggered as they spoke. He felt his own need building within his chest. The urge to pin Hollander down and fuck him. Knot him. The urge to give

him everything he needed and more. The urge to take care of him in every way possible.

"You're the only one I trust enough to ask."

The words had been echoing inside his brain since Hollander had said them. He found it funny, because Hollander was the only one *he* trusted to share his rut with. Not that Hollander needed to know that he'd never felt comfortable enough with anyone else to rut with them. It was hypocritical to give Hollander shit for enduring his heats alone when Ilya did the same with his ruts. But to be fair, his ruts had never almost sent him to a Cycle Facility. It was typically three days of fucking his fist and trying his hardest not to wish it was a certain freckle-cheeked omega.

It wasn't fair of him to withhold that from Hollander when he'd been both brave and vulnerable, asking Ilya here in the first place. But keeping his cards as close to his chest as possible had protected him this far, he didn't know how else to go about it. It could be a conversation for another time.

He focused back in on the man splayed in front of him, tracing Hollander's rim with one finger, then two before sinking both in together, knowing he could take them even when not in heat. He had to bite back a groan at how fucking *soaked* he was. Even with the amount of suppressants he took, Hollander always got wet for him anytime they fucked, but this was something else entirely.

"God, you are so fucking *wet*, Hollander," Ilya groaned as he fingered him the way he knew Hollander liked while simultaneously pumping his cock.

Hollander was a revelation beneath him, moaning and writhing around Ilya's fingers. He knew it wouldn't take long to get him over the edge, but to help get him there just a bit faster, he added a third finger. That seemed to be the ticket, Hollander keened beneath him, back arching off the bed as he came.

Ilya worked him through it before carefully removing his fingers and letting go of his cock, which was still rock hard. He couldn't resist bringing the fingers that had been inside Hollander into to his mouth. Hollander's slick always tasted incredible - Ilya would know - but it was sweeter with his heat. He wanted more of it, wanted to eat him out until he cried, but right now that wasn't what Hollander needed.

Hollander was looking slightly more lucid after his orgasm, but Ilya knew it would only stave off the heat for so long. Still, he wanted him just with it enough before Ilya fucked him just so that he'd be able to communicate what he needed or if Ilya was hurting him. And also, a bit selfishly, he wanted Hollander to be able to remember the first time Ilya knotted him. The first time *anyone* knotted him.

"C'mere," Hollander murmured softly, reaching for him.

And who was Ilya to deny him?

He blanketed the omega's overheated body with his own, his clothed cock rubbing against Hollander's as their lips met in a desperate kiss. Hollander was nearly frantic with it, one

hand tangled in Ilya's hair, the other traveling down Ilya's neck, then his pecs and abs until Hollander was trailing around to Ilya's ass, gripping it as he pulled their hips impossibly closer.

"Please," Hollander breathed eagerly. "I want you so bad."

Fuck, Ilya needed to be inside him *now*.

"On your stomach," he urged gently as he tore his own briefs off, tossing them carelessly off the bed.

Hollander was already in the process of obeying before Ilya had even finished the sentence. He then got up on his knees, chest still flat to the bed, and arched his back and ass, presenting for Ilya.

Ilya's mind and body nearly short-circuited at the sight. Sure, he'd fucked Hollander on his hands and knees plenty of times, but never once had the omega presented for him. Understandably so. Seeing it now and knowing no one had likely ever seen Hollander like this before made him wild with desire.

"You're going to kill me, Hollander," Ilya murmured, mostly to himself as he ran his hand down the curve of Hollander's back.

"I just might if you don't hurry up and get inside me," Hollander replied, impatiently.

Good. He was at least coherent enough to sass at Ilya, which was exactly how Ilya wanted him. Ilya took a deep breath, sliding in to the hilt with absolutely no resistance.

Being inside Hollander was always a revelation. But here, with nothing between them and Hollander being tighter, hotter, *wetter* than Ilya had ever felt him before, was probably the closest he'd ever get to heaven.

They moaned in unison at Ilya's first thrust. One hand on Hollander's neck and the other on his hip, Ilya began fucking him in earnest, pulling him back onto his cock over and over. Shane met each thrust, clearly just as desperate for it as Ilya was, even though he literally just came.

"*More*," Hollander moaned.

Ilya set a brutal pace, fucking Hollander with every ounce of his strength. The room was a cacophony of lewd noises, from the rhythmic sound of skin on skin to their mingled moans.

"Like that?"

Hollander just nodded desperately, mouth parted in pleasure. Ilya knew this would be over soon, for both of them. Mostly because he could tell that Hollander was already getting close again. No matter how much stamina Ilya normally had, it always went out the window when he had Shane Hollander coming on his cock.

He bent down, kissing up Hollander's spine until he reached the juncture of where his shoulder and neck met, where his scent was the strongest, burying his nose there.

"God, you smell incredible," he whispered, which only made Hollander groan.

Ilya was getting close, but he needed to make sure Hollander got there first, and still wanted what was to come after.

"You still want my knot?" Ilya breathed into his neck, the snapping of his hips growing more and more desperate.

"Please," Hollander moaned between thrusts. "I want it. I need it."

Ilya bit into the meat of Hollander's shoulder. Not enough to break skin, just enough to quiet his own groan and certainly enough to leave a mark.

It was not lost on him that he was about to be the first person to knot Shane Hollander. The knowledge was driving him wild, fanning the flames of both his rut and newfound possessiveness. But another part of him wanted to make sure he made it good for Shane. Not only so that no other alpha would ever compare, but because right now, the need to take care of Hollander, to make this heat the best one he'd ever had by far, superseded just about every other urge in Ilya's body.

He brought a hand around to the omega's cock, jerking him off with little finesse to get him to the finish line before Ilya knotted him. He was thankful for Hollander's tendency to come *very* fast because it didn't take much to bring him over the edge again.

Ilya was quick to follow him, only managing a few quick thrusts before he was coming inside Hollander. As soon as he felt his knot forming, he tried his best to stay as still as possible, only rocking his hips ever so slightly.

"Oh my god," Hollander stuttered once it was fully seated inside him, and then he was coming again, just from the pressure of Ilya's knot.

"God, Hollander, you are so fucking hot," Ilya said because it was true. That moment, and truthfully every moment before it, would have a starring role in Ilya's future fantasies.

Hollander just laughed incredulously, and the movement must have done something to where they were connected because his laugh quickly morphed into a moan.

"Is okay?" Ilya asked. Not that there was very much he could do about it now.

Hollander nodded into the pillow beneath him.

"Feels good," he said, words slightly slurred. "Feels big. Full."

He let Hollander catch his breath, making sure he was fully with it before he tried to move them.

"I will move us to our sides, okay?" Ilya said. "Just follow my body so the knot doesn't tug."

Ilya did his best to get them on their sides with as little discomfort as possible. Once they were situated, he reached behind him to grab the bottle of water he'd left on the bedside table before bed. He enlisted Hollander's help to open the cap - his other arm was snug under the other man's neck - then gently coaxed him to drink some. It was an awkward angle, but it got the job done. Once Hollander had his fill, Ilya took the half-empty bottle and finished it off himself.

He did his best to pull the covers back over them, but he only managed to grab the top sheet. It was better than nothing. He pulled Hollander close, resting his chin on his shoulder. Hollander let out a pleased, sleepy sigh.

"Why did you not wake me?" Ilya asked him before he could fall back asleep.

"Hmmmm?" Hollander asked, drowsily.

"Earlier, when your heat started," Ilya clarified.

"Oh. Yeah. I just wasn't sure if I was…allowed to?" Hollander admitted, sounding chagrined.

"I will give you whatever you need this week. You just have to ask," Ilya murmured into his hair. "If I have been asleep three hours or three minutes, wake me up, okay?

"Okay," Hollander whispered back, sounding pleased.

He wasn't sure how much time passed while they waited for his knot to go down. Ilya was too busy spending that time placing kisses to the freckles on Hollander's neck and shoulders. Once it finally did, the other man was fast asleep. Ilya did his best to pull out as gently as possible.

He moved quietly around the room, grabbing the second toiletries bag he'd stashed in the suitcase. It was mostly just full of packs of wet wipes, which he'd forgotten to stash by the bed earlier, but he'd also brought a few other things. Knotting condoms, lube, and his suppressants, just in case. He was more than happy he wouldn't be needing any of them as he took the wet wipes from the bag and tossed the rest back into the suitcase.

He worked quickly, setting a few packs of wipes by the bed but also taking a pack out with him to the living room. He wasn't sure if Shane's distaste for sex-related messes would be overshadowed by his instincts while in heat, so he wanted to have some in reach. He made a quick pit stop to the kitchen to grab a few more bottles of water to bring back to the bedroom.

Hollander was still asleep when he came back, so he worked as carefully as possible to clean between his legs with a wipe from where he was positioned on his side. He whined a little at the cool touch, but quieted when Ilya hushed him. Ilya threw the used wipes toward the trash can, feeling triumphant when they easily sank in.

He settled back into bed. Not quite sure what Hollander wanted from him - some omegas could be touch adverse in between waves of their heat - he scooted close enough to feel the other man's warmth without touching him yet.

Hollander was having none of that. He reached back, grabbing Ilya's arm and slinging it over his own waist in a wordless demand to be held. Ilya happily acquiesced, snuggling back up behind him.

"You like to be held after?" Ilya asked, for future reference.

Hollander only nodded, making a small noise of assent as he traced his fingers up and down Ilya's forearm.

He knew they wouldn't have long. The first few days were always the most intense, with the shortest bouts between peaks. But right now they were both sated and sleepy, and Ilya couldn't remember the last time he'd been this content.

Shane never thought the words *heat* and *enjoyable* would coexist in the same sentence, at least for him. And, sure, he was hardly twelve hours into this one, but he could already tell things were going to be much, much different this time around.

He'd woken up twice more through the night. Each time he'd reached for Rozanov, the other man had woken immediately, giving Shane exactly what he needed.

The first time was before the spike of heat had fully taken hold. He was really only feeling the tell-tale buzz of it brewing beneath the surface. Rozanov seemed to realize this, whether by scent or by how attuned he seemed to be to Shane's body, and took his time. He'd flipped Shane onto his belly, much like the time before, but had wedged a pillow underneath his hips.

Then, he'd eaten Shane out for what felt like an eternity. Until Shane had been delirious with arousal, and the full brunt of his heat hit him. Rozanov didn't give him what he wanted until Shane had begged and begged and *begged* for it, his face a mess of tears. As they were fucking, Rozanov had loomed over Shane, forcing his head to the side so that he could kiss him. The angle was awkward, but the taste of Shane's slick was still on Rozanov's tongue, which was so fucking hot it made Shane's brain melt.

The second time, Rozanov had taken him slowly from behind on their sides, and Shane had gotten to watch as the sun rose lazily over the lake through the bedroom window.

"I see why you do not close the curtains," Rozanov had murmured before sucking Shane's ear into his mouth.

The sun rose early here in the summer, but it was thankfully never too strong this time of day. Just the slow, steady creep of daylight easing the room into morning. It made for weirdly romantic sex. Well…what *would* have been romantic sex if it were anyone other than Rozanov he was having sex with, of course.

When they finally woke for the day, Rozanov had gotten him into the shower for what was supposed to be a quick rinse. Unfortunately for Rozanov, he underestimated the power that the sight of his wet, naked body had over Shane. They barely made it out of the shower and to the bedroom before Shane was pushing Rozanov onto the bed and climbing on top of him.

He slipped Rozanov's cock inside himself and then took what he needed, riding him desperately as he chased his relief. Rozanov had seemed a little shocked at first, but quickly got with the program, planting his feet on the bed and fucking up into Shane with wild vigor.

It wasn't long before Shane got exactly what he wanted, another orgasm, and Rozanov's dick knotted inside him.

"*Christ,* Hollander," Rozanov had said, but he was grinning at Shane with the smile he always gave him when Shane did something that surprised him.

Shane had fallen asleep on Rozanov's chest after, only waking briefly when Rozanov gently pried him off to clean him once his knot went down. Shane wasn't sure how long he'd been napping, but when he woke, Rozanov was no longer beside him.

Shane went out to find him at the kitchen island, arranging food on a plate. He was shirtless and had really cute bedhead and was only wearing a pair of black briefs. Shane wanted to fucking devour him.

He slid up behind him, pressing their bodies flush. Rozanov let out the smallest gasp at the contact, but continued his task.

"Hollander. You need to eat something. Is nearly noon," Rozanov chided.

"I don't care," Shane said, reaching around to Rozanov's front - only to be stopped by the other man's hand.

Why was he even wearing anything in the first place? Rozanov should be naked. He should always be naked.

"That's not what I'm hungry for," Shane protested.

Which was when his stomach decided to growl loudly, the fucking traitor.

Rozanov raised a skeptical brow over his shoulder. "See. Even your stomach is calling you a liar."

"Don't care," Shane said, choosing one of the countless moles on Rovanov's back to give some attention to with his mouth.

"Hollander, if we both starve to death, I cannot fuck you the way you want. Because we will both be dead. So we need to eat."

Rozanov was right. Which was annoying. And Shane *was* hungry, not that he'd ever let Rozanov know that. It was just that his horniness very much outweighed his hunger.

“We make a deal,” Rozanov said magnanimously. “You eat everything here, and you can have whatever you want.”

“Fine. But I want you to feed it to me.”

Rozanov finally turned around then, eyes darkening, and Shane knew he was that much closer to getting what he wanted.

“Follow me,” Ilya said, taking the plate of food to the living room and sitting on the couch.

Shane climbed into his lap, sitting back on Rozanov’s knee. The plate held what looked like a makeshift charcuterie board with an assortment of meat, cheese, and fruit.

Rozanov would take a piece of food off the plate, feed it to Shane, then take a bite of something himself. No matter how much Shane sucked his fingers or squirmed against him, he stayed true to his word. Even as Shane felt him grow harder and harder beneath him. He was getting more desperate now, tempted to take every last piece of food and just shove it all in his mouth at once in order to get what he really wanted. But as he watched Rozanov’s face as he fed him another piece of cheese, he realized that Rozanov was really enjoying this.

“You really like feeding me, huh?” Shane asked, mouth still a little full.

Rozanov simply held a piece of fruit up to his mouth. But Shane could see color on his cheeks, so he knew he was right.

As soon as Shane had finished the last piece of fruit, Rozanov practically tossed the plate onto the nearby coffee table and had Shane flipped onto his belly on the couch before he even knew what was happening.

“This what you wanted?” He asked, finally yanking his briefs down and pressing his cock against Shane.

“Next time, just feed me while we’re knotted together,” Shane offered.

“Hm…Is not a bad idea, Hollander.”

Ilya hadn’t meant to find the pamphlet in Hollander’s (annoyingly organized) junk drawer. He was simply searching for where Hollander had said he’d stashed a few Snickers bars that he was now craving, and just so happened to find it.

Heat Helpers: Safe and reliable heat companions for the omega in need.

He skimmed through the pamphlet. There was a lot of medical jargon that he certainly didn’t understand with his imperfect English, but he was able to comprehend enough of it. It was pretty obvious what it was, but there were different *tiers*. They ranged from platonic to what

the pamphlet called the *full package*, which seemed to be just about everything. There were even options for betas or fellow omegas for those who were alpha-adverse.

Hollander had brought up comfort alphas in passing the night before at dinner, but Ilya had no idea he was actually *considering* it. Had that been Hollander's plan if Ilya had said no or if he'd missed that call? To hire some random alpha to fuck him, to take care of him in Ilya's place?

The thought of another alpha being here instead of him flared Ilya's rut in a way that had never happened before. They'd just fucked, his knot had maybe gone down thirty minutes ago, but he needed to be inside Hollander again. Now. He needed to pin him to the bed and fuck him until he saw stars. Fuck him until he realized that no one could fuck him the way Ilya could.

Original mission forgotten, Ilya was tearing through the house toward the bedroom, stupid pamphlet half-crumpled from where he gripped it in his hands.

Hollander was dozing when Ilya came back into the bedroom, unaware of the storm brewing in his alpha's head. Ilya took a deep breath. The bedroom was the perfect amalgamation of both of their scents. It grounded him slightly, reminding him that *he* was the one who had been fucking Hollander senseless for the last almost twenty-four hours.

After they'd cleaned up from their most recent round, the very one that had led to Hollander requesting the ill-fated Snickers bar, Hollander had asked Ilya to grab him a sweatshirt from the suitcase. Feeling cheeky, he'd dug to the bottom to retrieve a black sweatshirt with yellow detailing. The front was bare, minus an Adidas logo, but each arm had his number on it. And his last name was embroidered across the back of the sweatshirt, spreading from shoulder to shoulder.

He had other similar pieces, but those all had his team's logo on the front, and even he knew that was a step too far. He'd smirked as he packed it, telling himself he was bringing it mostly to get a rise out of Hollander. But he knew he had ulterior motives.

He'd expected Hollander to throw the garment back at him, or at the very least give Ilya an eye roll and call him an asshole before putting it on. But Hollander had simply taken a look at the *ROZANOV* spread across the back of the sweatshirt before bringing the fabric to his nose to take a deep breath of Ilya's scent. He'd pulled the sweatshirt on with hardly a second thought, leaving Ilya standing there a little dumbfounded.

Hollander had then settled into bed and sent Ilya on his mission. Ilya found him right where he left him. Tucked into a bed that smelled like them and wearing one of Ilya's sweatshirts with Ilya's last name basically branded on him. It still wasn't enough.

Hollander, seemingly sensing his presence, opened his eyes, blinking a few times before focusing on Ilya standing at the foot of the bed.

"Did you bring me my - oh," Hollander cut himself off as he realized what was in Ilya's hand. Certainly not the stupid Snickers bar.

“Yeah, my doctor gave me that,” Hollander explained. “I mean, I’m glad I didn’t have to use it - “

“Would you have?” Ilya asked carefully.

“What?”

“If I said no. Or didn’t answer your call, would you have hired a comfort alpha?” Ilya asked.

“Well, yes,” Hollander said, looking a little embarrassed. “It was either that or a Cycle Facility…so.”

And that was fair. That was really fair and sensible, and he had no claim over Hollander, so he had no right to be such a jealous bastard over it. In any other situation, Ilya would feel less insane about it, but he was rutting, and this man made his instincts go fucking crazy on a good day if he was being honest with himself.

“You really think any of them could compare to me?”

He was being a little absurd and a *lot* possessive, of which he was well aware. But he also couldn’t really stop. His rational brain was reminding him that Hollander called him first. Hollander had *him* here instead of some random alpha-for-hire who didn’t even deserve to breathe the same air as Shane fucking Hollander.

But the part of Ilya’s brain that was deep into his rut had no interest in rationality.

“No,” Hollander said, very, *very* earnestly.

“You wouldn’t have let them fuck you like I fuck you?” He asked, prowling closer to the bed.

“No,” Hollander said breathlessly. “If you said no, I would only have hired a platonic alpha partner. The others wouldn’t be able to give me what I need. Only you.”

He should feel embarrassed. He was overreacting. But Hollander’s pupils were huge, and he was looking at Ilya with a heat behind his eyes. He *liked* this. He liked Ilya’s possessiveness. So much so that it was sending him into another bout of heat. Ilya could smell it now.

Hollander parted his legs in invitation as Ilya finally joined him on the bed, crawling up his body and bringing their hips flush together. They were both already hard.

He gripped Hollander’s jaw in one hand, pulling him in for a filthy kiss before bringing both hands down to his hips and flipping him over onto his belly. Hollander got up to his hands and knees immediately, then started tugging at the hem of the sweatshirt like he was going to take it off.

“No,” Ilya said. “Leave it on.”

Hollander threw him a smug, knowing look over his shoulder, the little shit, so Ilya decided the only recourse was to push into him in a single thrust and fuck that look right off his face.

He took Hollander hard and fast, probably more so than he'd ever done before. The other man didn't seem to mind, he frankly looked blissed out, eyes rolling into the back of his head as he took every single powerful thrust of Ilya's cock like he was made for it.

He knew it was illogical, he knew he had no real claim over the omega beneath him, but the thought of it was not enough on its own to satisfy his instincts. He dug his fingers into Hollander's hips as he pulled the other man's body back into his own to meet his relentless thrusts.

Maybe he was egotistical, or maybe he was just a possessive asshole, but as he fucked into him, he couldn't help but stare at his own last name, spread across the width of his muscular shoulders like a brand.

Mine, he wanted to growl. Wanted to pull the neckline of the sweatshirt to the side and bite down right at the base of Shane's neck and -

Christ, it had only been a day, and he was already in over his head. Ilya chased the thoughts away by fucking into Hollander even harder. Hollander was making the most beautiful noises beneath him, crying out in pleasure with every snap of Ilya's hips, doing his best to meet him thrust for thrust.

Hollander came suddenly, and untouched, and Ilya fucking *loved* when he did that. It always drove him crazy, but even more so now. It filled him with a deep sense of alpha satisfaction, further proving to himself and to Shane that no one else could fuck him like Ilya could.

Ilya didn't last much longer. His orgasm felt nearly eternal, even after his knot formed, the shocks of pleasure were still coursing through him. He couldn't help the tiny, aborted thrusts his hips were doing as the pleasure ebbed, but he made sure to be careful enough not to hurt Shane.

Once the high had worn off and Ilya had helped Hollander take the sweatshirt off after he'd grumbled about being overheated, they lay on their sides, catching their breath. Ilya felt the embarrassment sink back in as they lay there, and it made him unsure of what to say in the aftermath. "*Sorry I'm a possessive asshole even though I know you're the furthest thing from mine*"?

He should, at the very least, check in to make sure that he wasn't too rough. Even if he hadn't fully lost control - no amount of rut-induced jealousy would ever get him to do so, especially with Hollander - it was still a side of him Hollander had never really seen before.

With Ilya still lost for words, it was Hollander who broke the silence.

"That was really fucking hot, but as soon as your knot goes down, I still want that Snickers bar."

Ilya couldn't help it, he barked out a laugh, body shaking against Hollander's, both in relief and at the absurdity of it all. Hollander seemed a little shocked, just for a moment, before he joined in, laughing alongside Ilya. It was weirdly sweet and domestic, given everything they'd just done, and Ilya couldn't remember the last time he'd laughed like this.

As their laughter died down, Ilya thanked every lucky star that he'd picked up Hollander's call the day before. That he was the one lucky enough to be here, seeing Shane through his heat.

Day Two

It only took three days of being at the cottage for Ilya to slip up.

They were technically only on the second full day of their respective cycles, and it had been a pretty constant cycle of wake, fuck, eat, sleep, repeat. And realistically, they weren't getting much sleep. So maybe it was the lack of rest, or maybe it was the constant buzz of hormones.

Or maybe it was the fact that Shane Hollander was riding him on the couch like his life depended on it, and it was frying Ilya's brain.

"*Fuck*, Shane," he said, urging Hollander's hips on with his hands. "Just like that."

It wasn't until Hollander's hips stuttered ever so slightly that he realized his mistake. Terror coursed through him. He'd always been so careful, built his walls so high. Sticking to last names kept a certain distance between them. They'd never crossed this line. He just hoped that, if nothing else, Hollander would pretend it had never happened to save Ilya the humiliation of it all.

But then Shane started riding him harder, more desperately, as he pulled Ilya in for a messy kiss.

"Ilya," Shane breathed against his lips. Like a revelation. Like a prayer. "Oh, god, *Ilya*."

"*Da*, sweetheart," he murmured. "Ride me just like that."

Shane came, untouched, almost immediately, and the shock of it mixed with how fucking *hot* it was when Shane came like that had Ilya coming right after. As Ilya's knot formed, Shane kissed him desperately, wherever on Ilya's face he could reach. His forehead, his cheek, the bridge of his nose, then finally his lips. Ilya was so stunned and still recovering from the shock of hearing Shane say his first name that he could hardly keep up.

Once his scattered thoughts finally started to clear, he brought Shane down in a quasi-hug, burying the omega's face in his neck. Partially because he wanted to feel him as close as possible, but also because he didn't want Shane seeing his face while he freaked the fuck out.

He'd been so excited at the prospect of seeing Shane through his heat that he'd never considered the ways in which doing so would ruin him, maybe forever.

Here, in this cottage where it felt like they were the only two people in the world, Ilya knew he couldn't go back to how it was before. Back to quick fucks and pretending they were only in it for the sex. Back to suffocating his feelings in the hopes they wouldn't surface.

Ilya should have known that sharing this amount of intimacy with Shane would only open the floodgates. That once he'd had the barest taste, he'd want more. He'd want everything.

He stroked through Shane's hair, grounding himself as he breathed in the other man's comforting, familiar scent. He would let himself enjoy this week. And if he did everything in his power to prove to Shane that he was good enough for him - a good partner, a good alpha - then maybe by the end of the week, Shane would let Ilya keep him.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day Three

"So…any fun plans for the rest of the summer?" Shane asked.

It was the third day of Shane's heat. The desperation of the first forty-eight hours was starting to wane. The waves were still coming at about the same frequency, but he was starting to feel a lot more lucid between rounds.

Which meant they'd had a lot more time to just…exist in each other's space. And time to talk as well, which was frankly pretty new for them.

Most of it had been fairly neutral, normal conversation, but it was more than they'd ever spoken about things other than sex or hockey before. It was kind of…nice, actually. Ilya really was pretty easy to talk to, occasional language barrier notwithstanding, and he was being more open with Shane than he'd ever been in the years they'd known each other. Maybe it was the sex making him pliant. Either way, Shane wasn't going to take it for granted.

And they were on a first-name basis now. Which was sort of weird, and in any other circumstance, it probably would've freaked him out a little. Or maybe a lot. The first names, how close they were getting and so fast, all of it. But the heat buffered a lot of his normal anxieties, so Shane didn't really fixate on it the way he normally would.

They were on Shane's couch again, Ilya resting back against the cushions with Shane sitting in his lap, facing him. Ilya's knot was snug inside Shane, and probably would be for at least another twenty minutes, so what else was there to do but start some small talk.

"I have to go to Russia, at least for a little bit before the season starts," Ilya said, looking none too pleased about it.

To distract himself, or maybe distract Shane, he grabbed a grape from the plate of fruits and cheese he'd had the forethought to stash on the side table by the couch before they'd started their latest round of fucking. When and how, Shane had no idea. But he was glad that Ilya did. He must've learned that the most opportune time to get Shane to eat was when they were knotted.

Shane had already chugged half his water, and his stomach had growled nearly immediately after they'd both come down from their orgasms. Ilya held the grape up to Shane's lips.

"Eat," he murmured.

Shane obeyed, sucking on Ilya's fingers ever so slightly as he took the fruit from between them. It was worth it for the way the alpha's gaze heated as his cock twitched inside him. Shane had been a lot less of a pain in the ass about eating as the days wore on, once he realized how much he enjoyed being fed by Ilya. Ilya seemed to enjoy the act of feeding Shane even more. He still wasn't going to let that divert the conversation.

"Why?"

"Hm?"

"Why do you 'have' to go to Russia?" Shane asked.

"Are you really asking me this when we are knotted together? What happened to sexy pillowtalk, Hollander?" Ilya groaned.

"Well, the last time I tried to talk to you about it, you kicked me out of your hotel room…so," Shane said, unable to look Ilya in the eyes as he did so.

Ilya cradled Shane's face in one of his large hands, forcing him to meet his gaze. There was an apology in Ilya's eyes.

"Look, we don't have to talk about it if you don't want," Shane continued. "I'm just trying to understand you better."

Ilya's entire demeanor softened.

"Home is…complicated," Ilya said quietly. "My father is sick."

"Like cancer?"

Ilya shook his head. "Alzheimer's. I spent the past few summers taking care of him while in Moscow."

"Oh, wow. I'm sorry, Ilya," Shane whispered. He hadn't had the slightest inkling that Ilya was dealing with such hardships at home.

"He is nearing the end, I think," Ilya sighed, face conflicted. "Polina, my stepmother, she does not care, she is more worried for herself. My brother only cares because I pay him to care."

"And you?"

"I don't know," Ilya sighed. "He has never been good to me. The disease…it is the nicest he's ever been. He is still an asshole sometimes, but now is mostly just…sad. Because even when he is mean, he is still confused."

He paused and pondered for a moment. Shane stayed silent, letting him gather his thoughts.

"It will be a relief, I think," Ilya finally admitted. "When it does happen. There will be little left for me in Russia by then. What's left of my family cares even less about me than they do

my father. They only care that I make a lot of money and share it with them."

"Your family doesn't deserve you," Shane said, before he could think better of it. "Sorry if that's an overstep. But it's true."

Ilya gave the barest shake of his head, so Shane nodded exaggeratedly in response. He wasn't sure if Ilya would ever believe him, but he'd do his best to make him try. Ilya huffed out a weak laugh, which was at least something.

"I have never been enough for him," Ilya finally said, quietly. "For any of them. No matter what I do, it is never enough."

He looked away quickly then, biting his lip, tears gathering at the corner of his eyes.

"Hey," Shane soothed, bringing Ilya's head down to his shoulder and enveloping him in a hug that was slightly awkward due to their positioning.

He was nervous at first, unsure how Ilya would take the gesture, but he simply let out a stuttering breath before he was clutching Shane to him, his arm wrapped so firmly around Shane's waist it nearly took his breath away. He wasn't sure how long they held each other like that, but it wasn't until Ilya's knot went down and Shane made a noise at the feeling of cum dripping out him that they parted.

Ilya laughed at the mild disgust on Shane's face. Shane had been so out of it the first two days he'd hardly paid any mind to the unpleasantness that followed a round of heat fucking. But now in his newfound lucidity, even if it *was* pretty hot and definitely satisfied some sort of primal instinct within him, the actual sensation of it was kind of gross.

"Let's clean you up," Ilya said, then he stood up from the couch, taking Shane with him. Which was crazy because Shane was a grown ass man and pretty much the same size as Ilya, but Ilya had stood like it was nothing, placing Shane gently on his feet.

"Show off," he muttered, but the little display had *definitely* turned him on, and he knew that Ilya could tell.

"I know I am very sexy, Hollander, but don't give me those eyes," Ilya said as he took Shane's hips, turning him around so that Ilya's front was to his back. "You need a shower. You are all sweaty. And covered in cum."

"And whose fault is that?" Shane said as Ilya started pushing him in the direction of the bedroom.

"Mine," Ilya said, sounding a little too pleased with himself. "All mine."

Yeah, Shane thought, *all yours.*

Later, they were spooning, still tied together on Shane's bed. He'd actually been able to consume some semblance of a dinner, which had made Ilya look very pleased, before he was itching for it again. It certainly was nowhere near bedtime, and the sun was still an hour or so away from setting, but they'd napped a lot less today than they had the previous few days, so Shane was pretty drowsy.

He was feeling brave, or maybe stupid, when he asked, "What about your mom? It's just you've mentioned your stepmother, but…"

Shane could *feel* Ilya tense against him as he answered, almost on reflex, "She is dead."

"Wow, god, sorry, I really should stop prying," Shane said quickly. "You really don't have to tell me anything don't want to."

Ilya, to Shane's surprise, just chuckled and held him closer, placing a few closed-mouth kisses to his shoulder.

"Is okay. Feels nice to talk about it. Makes me feel less alone."

Shane found where Ilya's hand was resting on his belly and took it in his own, weaving their fingers together. He didn't press for any further information, just gave Ilya's hand a quick squeeze of encouragement. Ilya didn't speak for some time. He alternated between leaving sweet kisses on the back of Shane's neck and shoulders and breathing in Shane's scent from his hair.

"She…" Ilya eventually said, struggling to find the words. "Took her own life. I found her. I was twelve. "

Shane couldn't help his surprised intake of breath at Ilya's admission. His heart broke, thinking of a twelve-year-old Ilya in that situation. He was so fucking *young,* and Shane was sure his dickhead father was nothing close to the comforting figure Ilya needed at the time.

"Oh, Ilya," Shane said. "I'm so sorry."

"She was sick. Very sad. And my father…he did not help. I do not want you to think she was weak."

"I would never think that."

"I also do not want you to pity me," Ilya said.

"I don't. I would never," Shane said. "I wish you'd never had to go through that. That you grew up in a kinder world. But I would never pity you."

Ilya was silent behind him, but he gave Shane's hand a few gentle squeezes.

"If anything, I'm impressed by how strong you are," Shane admitted before adding carefully, "And even with all that you've been through, how *good* you are."

He heard Ilya's breath catch behind him before he covered it with a scoff.

“Pfft, good? I am an asshole Hollander, remember?”

“Oh, you’re definitely an asshole,” Shane said. “But I still think beneath it all, you’re good.

Ilya grew very still behind him. Shane hoped he hadn’t crossed a line, but suddenly Ilya was tilting Shane’s head back so they could kiss over his shoulder. The angle was awkward and they couldn’t really kiss as deeply as Shane would’ve liked, but it didn’t matter. It was still perfect.

Day Four.

Shane could already tell his heat was on a slow taper, which was unheard of for him on the fourth day of his cycle. This time last year, he’d been mindless with heat, sweating through the sheets of his bed alone while doing all he could to take the edge off with a knotting dildo.

Now, he was lounging in the sun in the backyard of his cottage while Ilya lay beside him. The bouts between the waves of his heat were starting to get longer. They’d fucked twice that morning, and Shane had felt almost *normal* in between. Which meant he’d started to feel stir crazy, and asked Ilya if they could eat a light lunch outside and maybe get some sun. Ilya had indulged him, and they’d laid out a blanket for a makeshift picnic.

Shane closed his eyes, tilting his head up toward the sky, soaking in the summer sun. It was a little surreal, being outside in the sun and feeling almost normal while technically in the middle of a heat. He felt Ilya’s gaze on him, and when he opened his eyes, it was to Ilya looking at his face very intently.

“What?” Shane asked.

Ilya leaned in close, brushing a thumb across his cheekbone

“Your freckles,” Ilya said. “They are darker. Looks like there are more of them, too.”

“Oh. That always happens in the summer, especially when I’ve been in the sun a lot,” Shane said.

“They are very cute,” Ilya replied.

Shane had never cared much for his freckles, but people always complimented them. He had never realized that Ilya even noticed them, much less thought they were *cute*.

“You think my freckles are *cute?*” Shane asked.

Ilya nodded. “They were the first thing I noticed about you.”

That left Shane a little speechless. He'd had no idea. He also had no idea how to respond to that, either. It felt like an admission, of sorts. Shane just wasn't quite sure what kind.

"Eat your lunch," Ilya said after what must've been an extended period of Shane gaping at him. "Unless you want me to feed it to you again."

He wasn't sure if he was teasing Shane or genuinely offering, so he just took the plate, popping a sliced strawberry in his mouth. Part of him kind of missed the phase of his heat where he'd been out of it enough to ask Ilya to hand-feed him everything. He was too clearheaded now to bring himself to ask for that.

They were on a pretty good roll until after they'd eaten and he'd put his glasses on to read his book. He'd forgotten that Ilya had never seen him in them before and expected to be teased, but instead, Ilya just looked at him in a way that sent shivers down his spine. He'd knocked the book out of Shane's hands and blown him right there. Then he'd taken him inside and told him to keep the glasses on before fucking him on the couch, staring at Shane's face the entire time.

The day continued much like that. They talked, they fucked, they cuddled, spent time in the sun, played video games, fucked some more. It was really nice. The stark contrast of *this* compared to his last heat kept hitting Shane. He tried not to think about the fact that he'd never be able to go through another heat alone again, not after learning how enjoyable it could be. He absolutely did not think about the fact that he didn't want to go through another heat without Ilya ever again.

He could freak out about that later. Now was not the time.

Later, they sat on Shane's dock, watching the water as the sun started to dip lower in the sky. It wasn't quite sunset yet, but it would be soon. Shane sipped on a ginger ale as Ilya watched him, looking weirdly pleased.

"How old were you when you first presented?" Shane asked. It was something they never talked about before.

"I was young," Ilya said. "Fourteen. Russia is not the best place to be anything other than a beta. Many more laws than Canada or even the United States. Is not nearly so bad for alphas, though. They are…I don't know a good English word for it. Admired? Many positions of power held by alphas in Russia. But still, many laws about them."

"I can't even imagine," Shane said.

He felt guilty about how ignorant he'd previously been about Ilya's home country. It was no wonder he'd snapped at Shane on that Vegas rooftop all those years ago.

"I think if I had been an omega, my father would have thrown me into the streets," Ilya said idly. "I am glad that it is better here. For everyone. And especially for you. In Russia, they do not let omegas play hockey. They almost weren't allowed to host the Olympics because they did not want omega athletes from other countries competing either, but the Olympic Committee stepped in."

Shane hadn't known that. Shit, he really should pay more attention to that kind of stuff.

"I didn't present until after the draft," Shane said.

"Really? Wow, you are late bloomer," Ilya said.

Shane nodded. "Yeah. I wasn't expecting it like, at all. It was the week right after, too. Both my parents are betas so none of us really saw it coming.

"It was scary, you know? So much was changing at once, and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to get all my hormones in check in time to play the Prospect Cup again."

"Maybe we would have won that year," Ilya said.

"Yeah, right, asshole."

"That is a lot at once, though, you are right," Ilya empathized. "It didn't feel like it at the time, but we were so young back then."

"And then that summer…with the commercial and the showers," Shane started, cheeks flushing at the memory.

"Oh, trust me. I remember," Ilya grinned lewdly.

"I was gonna say thank god I'd already had my heat that year because I definitely think you would have triggered it, suppressants or not," Shane said.

"Mmm, shame. Would've saved me two years of trying to get you to let me fuck you."

"Oh, you mean two years of you blowing up my phone begging for this ass?" Shane shot back and was vindicated when he saw a slight flush rise to Ilya's cheeks.

"I did not *beg*," he muttered.

"*Anyway*," Shane said."It was just…a lot of pressure back then. Between my reputation preceding me and all the emphasis my team, brands, *and* mom were putting on me being half Asian. It just felt like one more thing to make me feel... other. Like I had to work twice as hard as everyone around me to prove I belonged there."

Ilya nodded. "I understand completely. You do not have to explain to me. Plus, there were no other openly registered omegas at the time. It would have brought you even more attention. Not all of it good."

"Yeah, exactly. I think a lot has changed since we were rookies, and the number of players openly registering as omegas in the last few years has given me a lot of hope."

"Do you ever think you will ever register as an omega?" Ilya asked.

"I think so, yeah," Shane replied. He'd been thinking about it a lot lately, actually. The weight of having to hide his designation had been feeling heavier and heavier. "It's stupid, but I feel

like it's no question now that I belong in the sport. Sucks that I had to get two Cups to feel that way, but still."

"Had to throw in that brag, huh, Hollander?"

"Shut up. But now I think it's indisputable. And I was able to do it on my own terms without the added pressure of my designation over my head."

"You should not have to prove yourself, but I understand. Is the culture of the sport. I support your decision either way," Ilya said."And if other players give you shit, you tell me. I will make sure to punch every one of them on the ice."

"Wow, my knight in shining armor," Shane deadpanned.

They lounged in the waning sun for some time in companionable silence after that. It was a rather warm summer evening, but Shane didn't mind. Ilya, on the other hand, did.

"Ugh, is still so hot out," Ilya complained, suddenly. "I think we should cool down."

Without further preamble, he stood, then jumped into the water in a cannonball, making sure to splash cool lake water all over Shane.

He popped back up out of the water, flicking his hair out of his face and grinning at whatever expression was on Shane's face.

"Asshole!" Shane called, but he was holding back laughter.

"Come get me then," Ilya taunted.

Shane quickly jumped in after him, pushing on Ilya's shoulders to dunk him under the water. They were laughing and roughhousing, and Ilya's hands were all over his body, which was probably why the next wave came so suddenly.

"Ilya," he breathed.

"What, you are giving up so soon?" Ilya asked, oblivious.

"*Ilya*, I think another wave is coming."

"Oh. Shit, okay, let's get you out of here," Ilya said, helping Shane over to the dock.

They pulled themselves up, and Shane immediately had Ilya beneath him.

"Want you," he said, leaning down to kiss him.

Ilya let him, just for a moment, before breaking it.

"Not here," Ilya said.

"I don't care," Shane shot back.

“You *will* care when we are tied together for twenty minutes on a dock, Hollander,” Ilya argued. “And you will complain the whole time.”

Fuck, Ilya was right, which was annoying.

“Fine,” Shane huffed. “Take me inside.”

He was so far gone he didn’t even complain when Ilya picked him up bridal style and carried him all the way inside.

“The rug,” Shane said, once they were in the living room of the cottage.

“What?” Ilya asked, setting him down and pulling his shorts off.

“Fuck me on the rug. I don’t want to get the couch wet. It’s good leather,” Shane said.

Ilya looked at him incredulously, then laughed fondly as he pushed the coffee table aside.

Shane was antsy that night as they got ready for bed. Ilya had fucked him through another wave, hardly an hour ago, so he didn’t think it was that. At least not judging by Shane’s scent or the slowing intensity of his heat.

He didn’t push, knowing Shane would come to him eventually. He had just finished brushing his teeth and was about to meet Shane in the bedroom when a throat cleared.

“I want to do something a little different tonight,” Shane finally said from where he stood in the doorway of the bathroom.

Ilya raised his brows. “I have fucked you in almost every position known to man this week, so I am not sure how *different* we can get. Unless you want to invent some new positions. Or for me to tie you to the bed and have my way with you.”

Shane’s eyes glazed over for a moment before he refocused.

“That sounds…maybe another time,” Shane said, blushing. He reached a hand out. “Come with me?”

Ilya, who would follow this man anywhere, took his hand as Shane backed up into the bedroom. Ilya leaned in for a kiss, but Shane pulled away, eyes dancing with mirth at the affronted sound Ilya made.

“Take off your clothes and go lie on the bed,” Shane said.

For the most part, they both seemed to prefer when Ilya took charge of their sexual encounters. At first, he knew it was because Shane was inexperienced. As his confidence had

grown, he'd become bolder, even if he still seemed more than happy to let Ilya take the wheel. But every now and again, Shane would take control. And Ilya loved it when he got bossy like this.

"Oh, you are calling the shots now?" Ilya asked.

"At least for right now, yes," Shane grinned. "On the bed. Clothes off."

Ilya put his hands up in surrender. He pulled his top off slowly, eyes only leaving Shane's as it came off over his head. He made a show with his shorts, thumbs tracing slowly along the waistband before he shimmied them down at a leisurely pace. Once they'd fallen to the floor, he kicked them away.

He settled himself against the pillows on the bed, ankles crossed and both arms behind his head. Mostly because it showed off his biceps when he did so, something that was confirmed by Shane's hungry eyes roving over his arms.

Shane took his own shirt off, but left his briefs. He then followed Ilya to the bed, crawling up his body until he could settle on his lap. He leaned down, finally giving Ilya the kiss he'd denied him earlier. It was sweet and unhurried.

"What is all this?" He asked as they broke apart.

Shane pulled back, just enough for their eyes to meet.

"It's just…you've done so much for me this week. This is the best heat I've ever had by far, and you've taken really good care of me," Shane explained. "I want to return the favor."

Ilya was split between preening under the knowledge that he'd taken good care of his omega and feeling very, *very* touched by Shane wanting to reciprocate.

"You don't have to do anything special for me," Ilya said, swallowing thickly. "I am happy to be here. Happy to help."

"I know," Shane said. "But I want to. I want to take care of you."

The words were simple, but it felt like a punch to the gut. He'd spent so much of his adult life caring for everyone around him. Trying to be the perfect son, brother, player, captain. With his family, it was often a thankless job, all they ever did was take and take and take.

And here in his lap was this perfect omega, this perfect *man*, who even in the midst of his heat was still trying to factor in Ilya's wants and needs. Ilya knew he had a pretty low bar for his expectations for others, but this was more than he'd ever been given.

"Ilya," Shane whispered at his silence, bringing their foreheads together. "Let me take care of you."

Ilya nodded fervently, chest swelling with emotions. Shane looked delighted by Ilya's agreement and placed another quick kiss to his lips.

He moved to kiss each of his cheeks, then the tip of his nose, which was a little startling and frankly kind of *cute*.

He then started winding a leisurely path down Ilya's body with his mouth, kissing and occasionally sucking. It wasn't until Shane kissed just under his right pec then moved on to his belly that Ilya realized what he was doing. He was kissing the pattern of Ilya's moles. Slowly, gently, reverently.

Ilya couldn't help it, he removed his hands from behind his head, sliding trembling fingers into Shane's hair. Not to push or to guide, but needing to just touch him.

Shane moaned against his belly. He loved when Ilya played with his hair. He continued tracing Ilya's moles with his lips and tongue, then buried his nose into Ilya's happy trail.

By the time Shane's mouth was within a breath's distance of his dick, Ilya was so fucking hard he was nearly on the verge of begging.

He didn't have to beg, though, because Shane's lips were quickly wrapped around the head of his cock before swallowing him down all the way to the base.

"Christ, Shane," Ilya moaned. He really did have a nice mouth.

Shane looked up at him then as he expertly worked up and down the dick in his mouth, and the tenderness in his eyes made Ilya's eyes sting.

"You are so good. So good for me," Ilya murmured.

And truly, what the fuck was wrong with him? Shane Hollander was sucking his cock like it was the most important thing in the world, and Ilya was on the verge of tears. Ilya couldn't remember the last time he'd been treated this gently. Certainly not since his mother had died.

Far too soon, Ilya was on the brink of coming. Even though he wanted this moment to last forever, he was powerless to Shane's hot, skilled mouth and the doting look in his eyes.

He warned Shane beforehand so that he could pull off in time, but Shane just swallowed all of it, which was something he didn't do often. Ilya was just thankful that he hadn't popped a knot from a blowjob. It had never happened to him before, he certainly never knotted outside of his rut or an omega's heat, but if anyone was able to make his traitorous body do that, it would be Shane.

He only let himself take a moment to catch his breath before his brain zeroed back in on Shane. He knew this was supposed to be about him, but he wasn't going to start being a selfish lover now.

"Do you need me to -"

"No. I uh. Came in my briefs," Shane admitted sheepishly.

Ilya just laughed, maybe a touch manically, at this perfect man.

“Asshole,” Shane muttered, but he was smiling.

“Glad you enjoyed yourself,” Ilya teased.

Shane made a face as he took the soiled garments off, launching them in the direction of his hamper. Ilya lifted in arm for him invitation, and Shane happily sidled up next to him.

“Was that okay?” Shane asked quietly from where he’d settled against Ilya’s chest.

“It was perfect.”

Day Five

By the fifth day of their cycles, Ilya knew Shane’s heat was bound to break soon.

He’d only woken Ilya once the night before, and they’d only fucked twice over the course of the day, which was a pretty hefty drop-off even compared to yesterday. They’d spent most of the day much like they had yesterday, talking, laughing, kissing, and enjoying the sun together. If Ilya let himself pretend, it felt like they were just two people enjoying a lakeside getaway together.

Ilya’s rut had run its course sometime the day before. Not that he felt much different today. He still wanted nothing more than he wanted Shane. To kiss him, to fuck him, to be in his space, to take care of him. He knew now that it wasn’t just a side effect of their cycles, and that the feeling would linger long after Ilya left this cottage. He was starting to accept that it might never go away.

They’d just finished dinner and were cuddled up on the couch, Ilya stroking and scenting Shane’s hair, soaking up every moment like this just in case it was the last. He smelled it before Shane started getting antsy. He’d grown very attuned to what Shane needed in his heats this week, and typically, the other man liked to let it get closer to the peak before either of them did anything about it.

This time, though, Shane got up from where he was resting on top of Ilya so that he could hover above him, face to face. He leaned down to take Ilya’s mouth in a slow kiss, rutting lazily against Ilya’s thigh as his dick began to harden.

“Another wave?” Ilya asked, like he didn’t already know.

Shane nodded, forehead bumping against Ilya’s.

“Need you,” he whispered.

Knowing it could very well be the final wave, Ilya picked Shane up, carrying him all the way to the bedroom. This could be the last time he'd be with Shane like this until they played each other in October. He wanted to do this right. He wanted to make it last.

Ilya placed him on the bed gently and got to work divesting them both of their shorts. Then he slowly made his way up Shane's body, planting kisses along the way. His ankle, his thigh, just above his bellybutton, over his rabbiting heart, finishing just under the juncture of his jaw. He planted his hands on the mattress, hovering just above Shane who looked up at him, eyes glassy and lips parted. He really was the most beautiful thing Ilya had ever seen.

"So pretty," he murmured.

Shane flushed, looking away.

"Stop," he said weakly.

"I know I say it to tease, but I mean it," Ilya said. "I have meant it every time, Shane."

Shane's face flitted through a series of complicated expressions before he settled on pulling Ilya down into a kiss that was equal parts desperate and tender.

"Please fuck me," Shane whispered in between kisses. "I want you so much."

It was stupid, and Shane's brain was currently heat-addled, so it's not like it meant anything deeper, but every time Shane said he wanted Ilya, it sent a jolt of foolish hope through him. Of course, he needed Ilya. He was in heat. But *wanting* him. That was something else entirely.

They fucked slow, the ebbing sunlight dancing across Shane from where it shone through the huge windows. He couldn't keep his eyes off Shane's face as he thrust into him, trying to commit every freckle, every micro-expression to memory, just in case he never saw him like this again.

Shane was looking right back at him. Vulnerable, open, *fond*.

They alternated between kissing languidly and just staring at each other while Ilya fucked into Shane with deep, measured thrusts. It was the most intimate sex he'd ever had, and he felt like any moment his stupid, bleeding heart would beat right out of his chest and expose to Shane everything he really felt about him. *Had* felt about him for longer than he'd like to admit.

He tried to fight it for as long as he could, but Shane was getting close, which meant Ilya would follow him not long after. He watched as Shane reached his own hand down, jerking himself desperately.

"Yes, just like that," Ilya encouraged.

When he looked back up to Shane's face, he was already watching Ilya, eyes half-open and dazed. Ilya was torn between where to look as Shane hurtled toward the edge, but settled on his face, entranced as always, at the sight that was Shane Hollander coming around his cock.

He was able to fuck him through the entirety of his orgasm before he was coming, too, eyes locked with Shane's the entire time.

They both stayed awake while Ilya was knotted to Shane for this final time. Ilya ran his fingers over every inch of the other man he could reach. Shane just lay there with his eyes closed, a soft, pleased smile on his lips, and his head resting directly over Ilya's heart.

He wanted nothing more than to stay like that forever, locked inside Shane, but nature eventually ran its course. He rolled them carefully so that Shane was on his back, then got to work doing a perfunctory clean-up.

Once he was done, Ilya paused for a moment by the side of the bed, unsure what Shane wanted from him now that everything was most likely over. Shane, drowsy and seemingly immune to Ilya's current inner turmoil, simply reached a hand toward him.

"C'mere. Wanna nap for a bit," he said.

Ilya complied because, as much as he teased Shane for his obedience in the bedroom, there was very little he'd deny Shane if only he asked. Shane hummed happily as he shifted to his side so Ilya could fit into place behind him. He rested his chin on Shane's shoulder, angling his face so that his nose was buried in Shane's hair.

He set a ninety-minute alarm on his phone. They'd need to get up eventually. He wanted to change the sheets before they fell asleep, and they both definitely needed a shower. Maybe Ilya would run Shane a bath.

Ilya wasn't sure what their dynamic would be like once Shane woke from the nap. He knew things probably wouldn't be the same without both of their hormones raging, but he wasn't sure how much Shane would pull away once his mind cleared.

His flight wasn't until the evening after next. Ilya hadn't been sure how long Shane's heat would last, so he'd made sure to make the reservation flexible. Would Shane want him to leave tomorrow instead? Ilya would at least want to stick around for a bit to make sure Shane came down okay from the heat and to help him clean up the aftermath.

He knew any measure of Shane distancing himself from Ilya would shatter his heart. All of his old wounds were whispering at him to be the one to do it first, assuring him it would hurt less if he did so. But the newfound comfort and security he'd felt with Shane over the last week overpowered those whispers.

He would follow Shane's lead, he decided. Whatever Shane wanted from him would be Ilya's to give. If he woke up cold and aloof, Ilya would follow suit. If he wanted to lean into the newfound ease and affection between them, Ilya would match that energy happily.

Either way, he just had to keep it together for the next forty-eight hours. And then…and then what? Spend the rest of his summer in Moscow, yearning for this man from halfway across the globe, staring at his phone and waiting for Shane's text?

The idea of not seeing Shane again until October felt like a knife to the heart. And when they did see each other, would it go back to how it was before? Would Ilya have to pretend like he had no feelings for this wondrous, beautiful man? That it was all just sex?

It hadn't been just sex for a long time. If Ilya had been honest with himself from the start, it had never been just sex. But now Ilya's heart was in it in ways he'd never thought possible. He was in too deep.

Ilya tried his best to let himself be lulled to sleep by Shane's even breaths and familiar scent as he held him impossibly closer. He realized there was no point in catastrophizing. For now, he had Shane Hollander sleeping peacefully in his arms, which, before this wee,k was more than he could've ever hoped for.

Chapter End Notes

the reason shane presented after the draft is because being horny for ilya in that gym triggered his first heat 😇

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

> happy holidays and happy cottage episode to all who celebrate ❤️ here's the final chapter!
> thanks again for all the love, kudos, and comments on this fic! i get too overwhelmed to reply to comments sometimes but please know i read them all and appreciate every single one.
>
> (also wish you guys could've seen my face when they talked about shane being an omega in that one recent interview....like i said...divine ordinance)
> anyway yaaaay final chapter hope yall enjoy!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Day Five

Shane woke, groggy from his nap, knowing that his heat was over.

Never before had he had such conflicting feelings about the end of heat. Normally, he felt exhausted, but relieved. Right now, he would've happily taken another day of heat if it meant he could spend it having incredible heat sex with Ilya Rozanov.

Shane groaned, burying his face in the pillow beneath him. It sounded like a phone alarm was going off from somewhere in the room. Shane certainly hadn't set it.

"Ah, none of that," Ilya said, silencing the alarm. "You will regret it tomorrow if you don't get up for at least a little bit right now."

Shane just groaned again and remained where he was, splayed face down on the bed.

"I drew you a bath," Ilya tempted from where he stood in the doorway of the en suite.

Shane perked his head up at that. His body was pleasantly sore, and he'd mostly spent the week taking perfunctory showers whenever he was clearheaded enough so a bath sounded incredibly appealing.

"Fine," he sighed, trying to hide his pleasure at the fact that Ilya was still here. Still wanting to take care of him.

He'd had the builders put in the huge soaking tub for this exact reason. He rarely used it outside of his heats, but it was still nice to have. Ilya had snagged his body wash from the

shower and placed it on the edge of the tub. Shane skimmed his fingers through the water, testing the temperature. It was perfect, just the edge of too-hot that he knew would feel incredible on his achy muscles.

Ilya helped him in with a steadying hand in Shane's. Shane sighed as he sank into the hot water. He could already feel the leftover tension in his body loosening. After he'd settled in, Ilya looked like he was about to head right back out of the bathroom, and that would certainly not do.

"Are you not going to join me?" Shane asked, keeping his voice as neutral as possible.

He was feeling a little clingy, but as much as he wanted to tell himself it was just an after-effect of his heat, he knew it wasn't true.

"I was going to let you relax while I changed the bedding," Ilya said, then paused. "Would you like me to join you?"

Shane nodded. "We can change the sheets together after."

There was a momentary flash of what looked like surprise across Ilya's face, but he quickly schooled his expression. He stripped efficiently and joined Shane in the bath, careful not to disrupt the water too much. The tub was the perfect size for both of them, and Shane silently thanked his past self for that unintentional forethought.

Ilya settled behind him, and Shane rested back against his chest, letting out a pleased sigh. They simply lay there together for some time, Ilya holding him and brushing his nose through Shane's hair. Eventually, he grabbed the body wash from the side of the tub and lathered it in his hands.

He urged Shane to sit forward a little so he could wash across his back and shoulders. His touches were slow and gentle. Once he seemed pleased with his efforts on Shane's back, he brought his hands around to start working on Shane's chest and stomach from behind.

"Was everything okay for you?" he eventually asked as he started to wash Shane's arms next.

Shane chuckled a little. "Well, what do you think?"

"I think I need to hear it," Ilya said. And, oh. His voice was very earnest.

Shane caught Ilya's hand with his own, pausing the other man's ministrations so he could link their fingers together.

"Best heat of my life," he said quietly, giving Ilya's hand a squeeze.

They were silent for a moment. Shane could feel the pleased rumble in Ilya's chest. Then, he pressed a quick kiss behind Shane's ear and continued washing him.

"Was it good for you, too?" Shane eventually asked.

Ilya paused, only momentarily.

“What do you think?” He parroted teasingly. He then pulled Shane flush against him with an arm around his chest and pressed a kiss to his shoulder. “Yes, Shane. Was good for me, too. Don’t tell anyone, but this has probably been the best week I had during a summer in a long, long time.”

“Really?” Shane asked, trying to keep how pleased that made him from coming across with a single word.

“Yes, really. Now stop distracting me so I can finish cleaning you before the water gets cold.” Ilya said, not unkindly.

“You started this conversation!”

“Mmm, hush,” Ilya whispered into his ear.

They fell into in easy silence as Ilya continued to clean as much of Shane as he could reach. Shane had to get from his knees down himself, but he really couldn’t complain about that. He wanted to return the favor - he’d take any chance to get his hands all over Ilya’s body - but he was having trouble keeping his eyes open, and Ilya claimed to have already taken a shower while Shane was napping. The water was growing tepid anyway, so they got out, toweling off quickly and letting the water drain.

He changed into a clean pair of sleep shorts and a crewneck sweatshirt of Ilya’s - the last remaining from the suitcase that he hadn’t already worn that week. Ilya, who looked pleased by Shane’s choice in sleepwear, seemed to be opting to sleep bare-chested, as usual.

“Jesus,” Shane muttered as they stripped the bed together. Moving the sheets sent a wave of their combined scents over him. It was actually quite a nice smell, their scents blended very well in Shane’s opinion. He’d been so preoccupied he hadn’t realized just how much they’d desecrated his poor sheets over the last few days.

“I knew you were far gone in your heat when you did not make one single complaint about getting the bed dirty all week,” Ilya teased.

“Shut up,” Shane said, half-heartedly. “Wow, we really put these through the wringer. I don’t even know if they’re salvageable.”

“Aren’t you glad I made you get up to change them? I would have never heard the end of it if you woke up tomorrow, heat over, on these disgusting sheets.”

Shane rolled his eyes, but Ilya was right. They threw the offending sheets into the corner for the time being, they’d have plenty of time to wash them tomorrow, and Shane really was exhausted. With the two of them, remaking the bed took almost no time at all, and soon enough they were back under fresh sheets and a clean duvet.

He already missed how drenched the old sheets were with their scents, but his post-heat brain definitely needed clean ones. Besides, there were two more nights of them sleeping on these

new sheets together, plenty of time for their scents to settle back in.

Shane was bone-tired, in the best possible way, but there was something he did want to talk to Ilya about before he succumbed to sleep. He always slept *hard* after his heats.

“When does your flight leave again?”

“Not until 5 pm the day after tomorrow. But if you want, I can leave sooner,” Ilya replied. “I know some omegas need to be alone pretty soon after the heat ends.”

“No,” Shane interjected quickly. “I want you here.”

It would have been the perfect opportunity to ask Ilya to stay longer. But it felt indulgent and selfish. Ilya had his own life to get back to and a dying father to attend to in Moscow. It wouldn’t be fair to ask him to stay because Shane had gone and let his feelings get tangled up with everything they’d done that week.

It didn’t matter. He still had a full day with Ilya tomorrow and then some time before his flight the following day. That was more than he could ask for. He would make sure to make the most of it.

“Then I will stay,” Ilya replied simply.

Shane could have sworn he mumbled something back like “thank you” before the exhaustion of the last week was overtaking him.

Day Six

It was nearly noon by the time Shane woke up the next morning.

Ilya had slept until almost ten himself. He’d woken with Shane curled up behind him and the sun already high in the sky. He’d slipped out of bed carefully, not without pausing to brush a careful thumb over Shane’s freckles, and spent the next two hours tidying up around the cottage the best he could before Shane woke. Mostly things like taking the trash out and some general kitchen chores.

He waited to start the laundry just in case Shane was particular about that as well. And also because he’d heard keeping some things scented from the heat around afterwards could help omegas with the comedown. He’d let Shane decide what he wanted to do with the soiled sheets and blankets.

Shane was so dead to the world, Ilya had to check a few times to ensure he was still breathing. Old anxieties died hard, it seemed. When he did finally wake, he came out into the

main room of the cottage squinting adorably against the copious sunlight pouring in through the cottage's egregious number of windows. He was wearing a pair of shorts that barely graced his mid-thighs and the crewneck of Ilya's that he'd worn to bed the night before. Ilya kind of wished he had the excuse of his rut still hanging around so that he could jump Shane right then and there.

"You were starting to worry me. I was thinking maybe my dick killed you," Ilya said to distract himself from Shane and his short shorts, wearing Ilya's clothes that smelled like *them*.

"Shut up," Shane muttered, cheeks pinking. "I typically sleep a pretty solid twelve hours after my heats. I should've warned you."

"How are you feeling today?"

"Good. A little sore," Shane replied.

"Ah, well, you did spend the past five days with my knot inside you, so," Ilya said.

"Not…*that*. My *muscles* are sore. Feel like I just played a week of playoff hockey," Shane said.

Ilya grinned at that. "Is the sign of a good heat."

"I guess it is," Shane replied.

"Sit," Ilya said, pointing to the barstools that line the kitchen island. "I will make breakfast. Brunch? Maybe later you do some yoga for those sore muscles. And so I can watch."

"Such a pervert," Shane muttered, cheeks fully aflame now. But when he locked eyes with Ilya, he smiled. And Ilya found himself smiling back, and for a beat they just stood there, staring at each other and smiling like a couple of idiots.

Then Shane's stomach growled, breaking the moment but making them burst into laughter.

Ilya's heart felt lighter than it ever had as he made them each a rather large portion of eggs and bacon as well as toast. He watched, pleased as Shane finished his whole plate while sipping on one of the ginger ales that Ilya had purchased.

After, as they loaded their dishes into the dishwasher (Ilya following Shane's system, of course), Shane kissed him casually, thanking him for breakfast. It startled Ilya, something Shane seemed not to notice, but as soon as the slight shock wore off, Ilya just took it as implicit permission that he could still be physically affectionate with Shane in the time they had left together.

They got started on the laundry, first with Ilya's clothes and the blankets he'd brought - save for one, which Shane had asked to keep while looking very embarrassed about doing so. He also kept the crewneck on, making no moves to throw it in the wash. Ilya couldn't help noticing that the other sweatshirt, the one with his name and number on it, just so happened

to be missing from the pile as well. Once the load was going, Ilya went to see what else could be done around the house, but Shane stopped him.

“We can clean up more tomorrow,” Shane said. “It’s beautiful out, and I finally feel normal again. Let’s just enjoy today.”

The rest of the day was spent much like the one before, just without the sex. Still, it was one of the best days Ilya’d had in a long time. They were able to just revel in the time spent together without the looming threat of another wave of heat hanging over their hands. He even convinced Shane to take the jet skis out. They spent what felt like hours just dicking around out on the water. Ilya’s face hurt by the end of it from how much he was laughing and smiling. It was fun. Being with Shane was *fun*. And easy.

He’d never really enjoyed summers before. Going back to Moscow, especially as of late, as his father’s condition worsened, was always his least favorite time of the year. But it was his duty to his family to do so even if, as Shane had said, they didn’t deserve it.

Previously, he’d fantasized sometimes about staying in Boston over the summer. Now he knew that all of his summer fantasies would center around this week and this cottage. He wondered if Shane would ask him back the following summer for his next heat. He even briefly fantasized what it would be like to have an entire summer like this with Shane - spending every joyous moment together, just the two of them - but quickly stopped himself. That wasn’t a possibility, and it would only hurt him more to delude himself, even for a moment, that it was.

They were both in a state of limbo, desperate to cling to the time they had left together. He knew he should press the issue. Have the awkward “*what are we”* talk. But he was terrified of soiling what time they had left together. So he focused on the here and now. On Shane smiling at him, eyes bright, freckles on his nose crinkling as he laughed at one of Ilya’s dumb antics.

Shane grilled them burgers for dinner. They ate them on the back porch, then just…sat cuddled together on Shane’s outdoor loveseat, watching as the sky darkened over the lake. He wasn’t sure how it happened. It started as lazy, post-dinner kisses. The next thing he knew, Shane was in his lap, cradling Ilya’s face in both of his hands like he was something precious.

Their kisses quickly morphed from lazy to edging on desperate, even as they held a certain level of tenderness. The last thing Ilya wanted to do was rush things. He’d thought the night before had been the last time he’d have Shane like this. But it wasn’t exactly easy to stay in control with Shane in his lap, hard and wanting.

“Take me inside,” Shane gasped. “Take me to bed.”

“You want…?”

Me? Ilya wanted to ask. *You want me?*

“I want,” Shane confirmed, nodding.

Ilya needed no other convincing, leading Shane inside and through the now-familiar layout of his cottage to the bedroom. He paused at the edge of the bed, waiting to see how Shane wanted him. Shane pulled him into a lingering kiss, backing him closer to the bed.

“I want to look at you,” Shane whispered against his mouth. “I want to be as close to you as possible.”

Ilya quickly stripped and moved back onto the bed as he watched Shane do the same. He pushed the pillows out of the way, positioning himself so that he was sitting back against the headboard. Shane seemed pleased with this position, settling quickly into Ilya’s lap and pulling him in for another kiss.

Ilya brought his hands to the muscle of Shane’s ass, squeezing and urging his hips to rock against Ilya, their cocks rubbing against one another. Shane let him indulge in that for just a little before he started to get impatient.

“Not enough,” he complained. “I want you in me.”

“Are you sure you’re not too tender?” Ilya asked, carefully trailing a finger around Shane’s hole.

He was fucking soaked, of course he was, and didn’t seem to be in any pain as Ilya breached him with one finger, but he wanted to be sure. Ilya hadn’t exactly gone easy on him over the last week.

“I’m fine,” Shane said. “I’ve wanted you back inside me all fucking day.”

That made two of them. But it was nice to know that Shane had been just as hungry for this as he had been.

Ilya gave him a few fingers first just to be sure. Shane seemed to be more than ready because as soon as Ilya withdrew his fingers, he was reaching for Ilya’s cock. He lined himself up then sank down to the hilt in one smooth move.

“*Fuck*, Hollander,” Ilya groaned.

Shane rode him in earnest, watching Ilya’s face the whole time. Ilya couldn’t look away, either. He felt hypnotized. There was so much he wanted to say to Shane, so much he wanted to tell him. But if this was to be the last time he had him until October, he didn’t want to ruin it or make it awkward with a failed confession.

So he took the coward’s way out, babbling in his native language instead.

“*Want you. Need you,*” he said in Russian between kisses. “*Want to keep you. Will you let me keep you?*”

Shane threw his head back with a moan. He couldn’t get much leverage in this position, neither of them could, but he was certainly trying. Instead, it was slow and deep, more of a grind than anything.

"*Nobody makes me feel like you do,*" he whispered against Shane's neck. "*All I want is you.*"

"Fuck it's so hot when you speak Russian," Shane groaned, pulling Ilya into a filthy kiss. If only he'd known what Ilya was saying, he wasn't so sure he'd still feel the same.

Ilya took the opportunity of their position to kiss along Shane's jaw and down his neck. He'd been careful about marks throughout the week, even though Shane had said it was okay. But now, now he *needed* to leave a mark on him. Something that would stick around long after Ilya had flown home. So much of the week had felt surreal, Ilya wanted to leave some sort of concrete evidence that he'd been here, that they'd shared this together.

He latched on to just above the hollow of Shane's throat, sucking and nipping at the skin with a single-minded purpose. He wanted to make sure it was somewhere Shane would see it every day. If nothing else, even if they didn't speak again until the fall, Shane would think of him each day until the bruise healed.

"Fuck that feels incredible," Shane groaned as Ilya gave his neck one final suck. "I'm so fucking close, Ilya."

Ilya was torn between giving Shane exactly what he wanted and prolonging this for as long as possible.

"*Please*," Shane pleaded, and Ilya had always been so susceptible to Shane's begging.

He took Shane's cock in hand, which rewarded him with a grateful sigh from the other man as Ilya began to expertly work him over. It was in the middle of Shane coming around him that he realized there was a familiar sensation at the base of his cock.

"*Fuck*," he whispered.

He'd never knotted outside of a cycle. He wondered if there was a way to…stop it? He wasn't sure how this worked, exactly.

"What's wrong?" Shane asked, still dazed from his orgasm.

"I think I am about to knot you," Ilya warned. "You should get off before I come."

That seemed to clear Shane's mind. "Is that even possible when we're not in heat or rut?"

"Apparently so," Ilya grunted. "You should probably -"

"No, I want it," Shane said, immediately starting to grind on Ilya's cock again. "Please. *Please* knot me."

That was, embarrassingly, all it took. Ilya was crying out, coming inside Shane and knotting them together, one last time.

"Feels so good," Shane murmured into his sweaty hairline as they caught their breath.

Ilya took a moment to gather himself before shifting them slowly and carefully down the bed and into a slightly more comfortable position to rest in while they waited.

It seemed his body's final act of humiliation was in the fact that it took his knot longer to go down than it ever had before, like his body had listened to his heart's desires and was doing its best to keep Shane locked in Ilya's lap for as long as possible.

"Is this normal? Outside of a cycle?" Shane eventually asked.

"I would not know. I have never knotted outside a heat or my rut," Ilya admitted, trying his hardest to mask his embarrassment.

"Oh," was all Shane said.

"Are you okay like this?" Ilya asked.

"I'm great," Shane assured him before pulling him into a tender kiss.

Ilya feared this was what would finally kill him. Gentle kisses while he was knotted inside the man he loved, with no excuse of heat or rut to justify any of it.

After years of fighting it - pushing it down, running from it, doing everything from letting it come to the surface - Ilya had to face the fact that all it took was one week for him to fall irreversibly in love with Shane Hollander.

Day Seven

They'd had a perfect week together.

Truly, Shane couldn't have asked for a better heat or a better heat partner. He'd been nervous that things would be weird after. But yesterday had been just as good as the rest of the week, if not better, because Shane was fully clearheaded for it.

So he should be happy. Sated. Content.

But as Ilya made his final preparations to fly back to Boston, Shane felt himself getting antsy. He'd had to leave the room as Ilya packed. He decided to busy himself with starting another load of laundry full of the soiled linens and clothes as a distraction. They'd spent most of the morning cleaning together, so there was very little left for Shane to do on his own.

He, once again, left one of the blankets as well as Ilya's sweatshirt out of the wash. He knew once Ilya was gone, the comfort of their combined scents on the fabric would help ease the

blow. Before his heat, he'd been so focused on the heat itself and the fear that always preluded it, he'd been unable to look past that to what would happen after.

Maybe if he'd had that foresight, he would've been better suited for how *empty* knowing Ilya was leaving made him feel.

Shane sat on his cottage's front steps as he watched Ilya pack his rental car, unsure of what else to do. He held Ilya's sweatshirt, the one with *Rozanov* embroidered across the back, the one Ilya had fucked him in, in his lap. Neither of them mentioned it. Ilya didn't ask for it back. He would offer to help, but Ilya really only had the two bags. Besides, Shane was afraid if he got too close, he'd do something stupid like steal the car keys and toss them in the lake. So he stayed glued to his spot, watching as Ilya shut the car's trunk with a loud *thud* that had a ring of finality to it.

"So…I will see you in October," Ilya said, as a statement and not a question, walking back over to Shane.

"Maybe," Shane replied.

"You know you'll miss this dick," Ilya teased playfully.

I'll miss you more. Shane wanted to say.

"You're still an asshole," he said instead.

Ilya simply leaned down, pressing a chaste kiss first to Shane's lips, then a lingering one to his forehead. When he pulled back, he took a deep breath, and a few beats of silence passed between them

"I am glad that you called me," Ilya finally said. "This week. It was nice."

"It was," Shane agreed. "Thank you again. I mean it."

Ilya cleared his throat. "If anything happens or is wrong post-heat, let me know. I do not go back to Moscow for some time."

Shane nodded. "I think I'm in the clear. But I appreciate that."

"Okay," Ilya said, still not getting in his car.

"Drive safe," Shane said. "And let me know when you're back at your place in Boston?"

"I will," a brief pause as Ilya's eyes roved over his face. "Bye, Shane."

Shane swallowed, hoping his voice would come out steady. "Bye, Ilya."

Ilya gave Shane one last once-over before nodding and getting in the car. As soon as Ilya pulled away and out of Shane's sight, he felt a gnawing sense of despondence. He told himself as he went back inside that the feeling would pass after a day or two. He was always

a little tender after his heats, and he would expect that to only be amplified after sharing a heat with a partner.

He pulled on Ilya's hoodie, immediately comforted by its smell, and grabbed the blanket he'd saved from the bedroom as well. Wrapping himself up, he settled on the couch and turned on the TV, pulling up one of his comfort movies. Something that was enough to distract him, while not so complicated that he actually had to pay too close attention. He texted his parents to let them know his heat was over and that he was feeling more than fine. They offered to drop off dinner, which he accepted. He knew he wasn't going to be in any state to cook anytime soon.

He tried to lose himself in the movie, he really did. But it was like he was feeling every kilometer that Ilya was driving away from him. And the more he sat there, the more he regretted not offering for Ilya to stay longer. The more he regretted not admitting to him how he really felt. How he'd been feeling for a while now.

Fuck, it had hardly been an hour since Ilya had left, and Shane was already a mess.

Shane decided he didn't care if it made him look stupid. He wanted Ilya. He was pretty certain he *loved* Ilya. And if the last week, and especially the last few days, had anything to show for it, he was pretty certain Ilya loved him right back. He'd been stupid earlier, he should've just asked Ilya to stay, should've admitted how he felt. Maybe he'd still be here. Maybe Shane wouldn't have to wait until October to see him again.

Maybe they could try to give this thing a real shot.

He'd rather know for certain than spend his life wondering.

Slightly anxious, but very determined, Shane grabbed his phone. He felt a sense of deja vu as he pulled up "Lily's" contact and pressed the call button.

Ilya felt a sense of wrong, wrong, *wrong* from the moment he turned the car on and started driving away. It was like there was a tether in his chest that tugged more and more incessantly the further he drove. He was afraid that once he got too far from the cottage, it would snap entirely, leaving him in even more pain than he was already in.

He'd told Shane things he'd never told anyone. He'd done things with him that he'd never done with anything else. And now what? They were supposed to just go back to how they were before? Quick hook-ups and sporadic texts while they kept pretending - like they'd been pretending for years - that they didn't feel more for each other? When Shane was the only person who made him feel *anything*.

He could maybe change things a bit. Text Shane more over the course of the summer, try to continue to nurture this delicate thing between them before it was gone entirely. Then maybe,

the next time Shane came to Boston, Ilya could casually float the idea that they could be something more.

Fuck, it wasn't enough. It would never be enough. He didn't want to wait until October, and he was more than done being *casual* about Shane Hollander.

"Fuck it," Ilya murmured to himself, and as soon as it was safe to do so, he turned the car back around.

He'd hardly been driving for half an hour, but there was no way he was getting on that plane and flying away from the man he loved without knowing for sure. Shane felt it too. Ilya knew he did. He'd seen glimpses of it before, but this week just confirmed it.

Ilya did his best not to speed or drive too recklessly. And while he should have been swarming with nerves, he closer he got to the cottage, the more sure he felt that he was making the right decision. Either way, he'd have answers.

Pulling into the drive, Ilya parked and shut off the car, taking only the key with him and not even bothering to lock it behind him as he practically ran up to the front door of the cottage.

Shane was there already, holding his phone to his ear with an adorably shocked expression. Maybe he'd heard the engine approaching, or perhaps he'd simply seen Ilya's car through all the windows, but he opened the door, surprise still frozen on his face.

"I was calling you," was the first thing Shane said.

He was wearing Ilya's sweatshirt. The one that smelled like them, the one that Ilya had purposefully not asked him to give back.

"Left my phone in the car," Ilya said, breathlessly.

"You're here," Shane said, finally snapping out of his daze enough to end the call.

He didn't look annoyed or even confused that Ilya had come back, hardly an hour after driving away. In fact, he almost looked…hopeful. Happy, even. It made Ilya brave.

"Please tell me you feel it, too." Ilya said." And if you don't, tell me you feel nothing for me. Say it, and I will turn around. I'll fly back to Boston, then Moscow, and we can pretend this never happened and go back to how things were."

Shane was silent for a moment, back to his state of shock, but he wasn't laughing in Ilya's face, and that was a good sign, at the very least.

"I can't…" Shane started, voice shaking ever so slightly.

Ilya's heart plummeted.

"I can't say i don't feel it, too," Shane said, voice firmer this time, and Ilya's knees buckled in relief. "I don't want to pretend this never happened. I don't want to go back to how things were. I don't think I'd be able to do that after the week we had."

And well, if they were doing this, he might as well go all in.

“I love you,” Ilya said.

Shane’s eyes went wide as he whispered, “Oh my god.”

And that was fine. Ilya didn’t need him to say it back yet. As long as Shane was willing to give this a shot, Ilya could wait for Shane’s feelings to catch up to his.

“I love you, too,” Shane said. “Like, *so* much.”

He wasn’t sure which one of them moved first, but they were kissing. It wasn’t much of an actual kiss because they were both too busy smiling, but it was perfect.

“I, uh, have another confession,” Ilya said when they finally pulled apart.

“What else could there be?” Shane asked skeptically.

“I should have maybe told you before, but this was the first rut I’ve spent with another person,” he admitted.

Shane pulled back so that he could look at Ilya fully.

“Seriously?” He asked.

Ilya simply nodded.

“And you gave me shit for not sharing my heats!”

“Ruts are different,” Ilya defended. “Mine are typically very quick and not severe. Definitely not severe enough to send me to a Cycle Facility.”

“Well. Seems like that won’t be an issue for me anymore,” Shane said.

“Not if I have anything to say about it,” Ilya agreed.

“I can’t believe you’ve never shared one of your ruts.”

“There was no one else I trusted. Except you,” Ilya admitted.

Shane’s face softened at the admission. “I wish you’d told me.”

“I should have,” Ilya said. “I did not mean to keep that from you. But telling you felt like an admission of sorts. An admission I wasn’t ready to make yet. To you, or to myself.”

Shane nodded, understanding before smiling to himself.

“What?” Ilya asked.

“Just kind of nice to know we were each other's first for something,” he shrugged. “I know it’s kind of lame, but -“

“You are my first love, too,” Ilya said.

“And you’re mine, obviously. Wow. It’s still all so overwhelming. Can we…we should sit,” Shane said.

They relocated to the corner of the big, L-shaped couch in the seating area past Shane’s kitchen, sitting as close as physically possible without actually sitting on each other.

“So, where do we go from here?” Shane asked.

“I know this will make things harder, make our lives more complicated. At least for a little bit,” Ilya said.

“It will,” Shane agreed. “But I don’t care. We’ll figure something out.”

“We *will* figure it out. Together. We are a team now, yes?”

“Yeah,” Shane smiled. “We’re a team.”

“As for the more urgent things…I should be able to extend the rental for a few days. But I do need to return it eventually,” Ilya said. “And I should probably go back to Boston at least for a bit -“ Shane made a panicked face, “ - so that I can pack for the rest of the summer.”

Shane’s expression smoothed at that. “The rest of the summer, huh?”

“I will have to go back to Russia for a little, before next season starts,” Ilya said. “I think if I do not go this summer…I may never see my father again.”

Shane took his hand, giving it a comforting squeeze.

“Then you should go. We’ll have plenty of time in the future.”

“We will,” Ilya agreed.

“Ugh, it’s going to be hell being away from you, now that you’re mine,” Shane sighed, throwing his head back dramatically against the couch. “Why are you smiling like that?”

“Because I like the sound of that. Being yours,” Ilya said. “And you worry so much. But you are right. It will not be fun. But I will be a free agent soon. And we can wait to bond until we live closer together. It will be hard. But it will be worth it.”

“You want to bond with me?” Shane asked.

“That is what you got from all that?” Ilya snorted. “Yes, Hollander. I am very much in love with you. I think I have been for a long time.”

“Me too,” Shane admitted quietly. Then a bashful smile took over his face. “So we’re what, boyfriends now?”

Ilya wasn't sure *boyfriend* was quite strong enough a word to encapsulate the breadth of what Shane was to him, but it was a very good start.

"Unless you'd prefer lovers," Ilya teased. It was worth it for the way Shane's cute nose scrunched at his aversion to the word.

"Ew. No. I like boyfriends. Boyfriends is…good."

Ilya got the feeling that Shane maybe felt the same, that the word wasn't quite enough. For now, it would do.

"Boyfriends it is, then," Ilya said, which earned another huge, earnest smile from Shane.

Ilya couldn't help pulling Shane in for a kiss. His heart felt like it might literally explode. He loved Shane, and Shane loved him back. They were going to make this work. Their kisses deepened, Shane running his hands through Ilya's hair and Ilya pulling him closer. He was about to pull Shane into his lap when there was a knock on the door.

"Oh fuck," Shane said, panic in his eyes as he pulled away. "That's definitely my parents. They said they'd drop off dinner."

"Shane? You decent?" a voice called from outside. It was muffled through the glass, but it was definitely Shane's mom.

Ilya was thankful they'd chosen *this* couch to do this on and not the other one that was in full view of the cottage's front windows.

"Give me a minute!" Shane called back. "I'll be right there!"

He looked back at Ilya. Ilya waited, giving him a moment to catch his bearings. He'd take Shane's lead on this one.

"Oh god, we have to tell my parents," he groaned, forehead bumping against Ilya's.

He liked that word. *We*.

"Will be a shock for them?" He asked.

"Well, they were so worried about this heat because of the last one," Shane said, sitting back to look at Ilya again. "I told them I had someone to come and help me, and may have slipped in a he. So they know *that*."

"But they do not know that *he* is your long-time rival?" Ilya asked.

"I don't think they'd guess it would be you in a million years," Shane admitted.

Ilya laughed. "I would be very happy to meet your parents, Shane. But it can wait if you want to ease them into it."

“Yeah. I was supposed to go over there first thing tomorrow, so maybe then? So I can let them know beforehand that I’m bringing someone and not give them both heart attacks on my doorstep.”

“Then you go,” Ilya said, patting his thighs encouragingly. “I will wait here. Call me if you need backup.”

Shane let out a long sigh before getting up and heading toward the door. Ilya heard the creaking of the door opening and listened intently to whatever was about to unfold.

“Hi, honey,” Shane’s mom said. “We just wanted to check on you. Your dad made you a lasagna for dinner, you just have to pop it in the oven. I’m sure you want some space right now but we just wanted to make sure everything was okay.”

“Thanks you guys,” Shane said. “And yeah, I’ll stop by tomorrow?”

“Sure. Feel free to bring the alpha that’s hiding out in your house along with you - oh, don’t give me that face, Shane. Why else would there be a car we don’t recognize here?”

“Oh my god, Mom,” Shane groaned. “*Maybe* okay? Let me talk to him first.”

“Just let us know before coming over so we can make sure we make enough food!”

“I will. Love you both. See you tomorrow,” Shane replied.

“Shane,” his mom said.

“Yes?” Ilya could hear the exasperation in Shane’s voice.

“Why are you wearing a sweatshirt with Ilya Rozanov’s name *and* number on it?”

Ilya clapped a hand to his mouth in an attempt to stifle his laughter. So much for easing them into it.

“Oh my god,” another new voice said. Shane’s father.

“I…we…he’s the one who helped me through my heat,” Shane sputtered.

There was a long pause. It made Ilya nervous. He could only imagine how Shane felt. He was just on the verge of getting up from the couch to give Shane some back-up when Shane’s father cleared his throat.

“Well. Seems like he did a good job of taking care of you by the look of it and by how short your heat was.”

Ilya preened a little from his spot on the couch. He *had* taken good care of Shane.

“Oh my god, *Dad*,” Shane groaned.

“And come to breakfast at ours tomorrow,” his mother added. “Bring Rozanov.”

“Ilya,” Shane corrected.

“Ilya, right,” his mother repeated. “Okay, well. If you boys need anything else, you know we’re just down the road.”

“*Yes*, Mom. Love you both. Thank you.”

“And I expect you tomorrow morning. Both of you,” She added.

“We’ll be there,” Shane said. “And we’ll explain everything. I promise.”

There was a chorus of *love you* from Shane and his parents before the door closed, and Shane let out a heavy sigh.

“Sounds like we’re expected to be at your parents’ for breakfast tomorrow,” Ilya said with a grin, meeting Shane in the kitchen as he put the lasagna away.

“I hate you,” Shane grumbled as he closed the fridge.

“Mmm. I think you actually love me,” Ilya teased back, crowding up behind Shane and placing a kiss on the nape of his neck.

Shane relaxed back into him, closing his eyes with a sigh. They just…swayed there for a moment, decompressing. It had been a rollercoaster of a day, to say the very least.

Sometime later, they grabbed Ilya’s stuff back from the car, and when he checked his phone, he laughed.

“What?” Shane asked.

“Oh, nothing. Just a notification that my flight is boarding soon,” Ilya said.

“Looks like you’re gonna miss that flight,” Shane grinned. “What a shame.”

“Guess I should change my ticket,” Ilya said. “*Again*.”

“Sorry, I keep making you change your plans,” Shane said, smile still firmly in place and sounding none too sorry at all.

“No, you’re not,” Ilya countered.

“I’m really, really not,” Shane agreed.

Choosing this, choosing each other, would complicate their lives insurmountably - at least for a brief period of time. But as he held Shane in his arms, kissing him and breathing in what was now his favorite scent in the world, Ilya knew it would be worth it, in the end.

Chapter End Notes

if you made it this far thanks again for reading and hope you had a good time!
my brain already started writing a college / frat au as i was finishing this one so keep an eye out for that one, until then you can find me on twitter where i'm trying to be more active!

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