

come closer

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/75774611) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/75774611>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics , Alpha/Omega , Omega Shane Hollander , Alpha Ilya Rozanov , Not Canon Compliant , Subdrop , Praise Kink , primal play , (if you squint)
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of unthinkable
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-14 Completed: 2025-12-20 Words: 18,059 Chapters: 5/5

come closer

by [wonderlou](#)

Summary

Shane has a secret, and the least Ilya can do is help him keep it.

Notes

we're here for the same reasons. here we go. sorry for any errors. not sure where I'm going with this but of course I just had to get it out.<3 title from the song Closer by Ne-Yo

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

Chapter 1

Shane had his forehead pressed against the door to his hotel room. He felt like he was in a plastic bag, condensation causing his tepid skin to slide on the thick wood. His hands felt further away from his body than anatomically correct, and his fingers were shaking as he fumbled open his wallet. His vision pulled in and out in a fog, Christ, he was about to pass out, his gut squeezing into a knot. He was almost there.

He dropped his wallet.

“Fuck,” he cried, pressing his face into the wood, because at least it was relatively cool, a small relief to the steam that was turning him inside out, it felt like, his entire body aching with his own pulse. He had to gear up equal amounts of courage and energy to move, to push his body further in this state it was in, to ignore what it was telling him to do. He pried his eyes open and looked down at the warped carpet. It was always too dark in these hotels, and the tears in Shane’s vision made it all the more *impossible* to do this.

A hand reached between his legs, and terror rocked through Shane, buckling his knees. He had either gone crazy, or someone was accosting him. He *needed* to be alone, and he had raced down the hall to be sure that no one saw him. He had double- and triple-checked and had even taken the stairs two at a time, each footstep tugging painfully at his core, his sacrifice for avoiding as many people as possible. But this hand had found him.

Should he call for help? No, he didn’t think he could. Even when in danger, Shane wouldn’t jeopardize his team knowing about him. That was a thought that he swallowed down thickly, ashamed of himself, terrified, embarrassed. He redirected his sluggish mind to fighting back, even though he was also ashamed and terrified and embarrassed of this, because his body didn’t care, and was halfway toward sinking to the ground, anyway.

“Relax, Hollander.”

Shane knew that voice anywhere, that slurring accent. He had heard it in post-game interviews, confident and cocky and sometimes breathless, like everything was lighthearted, not a big deal. Hands on hips, curls stuck to damp skin, upper lip gleaming with a sweaty smile. Shane breathed out a heavy sigh, one of relief, but also of stress, because while he knew now that his odds of getting taken advantage of were now virtually extinguished, now he had Ilya Rozanov at his ear, at the back of his neck, making his hair stand on end.

“Turn around,” Ilya directed, voice gravelly. Shane was further gone than he would ever like to be in front of another person, let alone someone like Ilya, who was all warm, the scent of toasted roses and charred marshmallow.

Shane groaned despite himself and swiveled around, his head never leaving the door, sweat slipping down his temples. He slumped back. His body did not feel like his own, attuned and attached to whatever it could latch on to first, the scent of an alpha making his vision cross. “Roz,” was all he could manage, wanting him to stop, wanting him to help.

Ilya was all gold in the hallway, hair overgrown and curled by his ears. He had on black slacks and a blazer was draped over his right arm, white shirt snug against his chest. Shane's eyes dragged over him like there were stones tied to them, and he took shallow, timid breaths. He did not want to breathe him in; he did not want to make a show of breathing him in, because Rozanov already looked a little uncomfortable. There was a single divot between his russet eyebrows. He was chewing at a piece of gum, and his jaw was tick-tick-ticking, tense right at the junction.

Was he coming back from a date? Shane could not help but wonder this while also wanting to be the gum Ilya was chewing. He wanted to be in his mouth, around his teeth, down his throat.

"Rozanov," Shane gasped, mortified, maybe a little starstruck. It took the effort of a superhero for him to lift his hands to cover his eyes. Here was their first formal interaction after years of commentary and comparison, and Shane was making a fool of himself. He was halfway toward clawing at the door, even closer to asking Rozanov something he shouldn't. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry for what?" Ilya sounded bored, low. He opened Shane's wallet and unsheathed exactly what he had been looking for: his hotel room key. Silver and green in his perfect fingers, he took one step close, too close, and slid it horizontally into the door. A little green drop shone with a successful entry; a small chime cut through the space. "You are okay?"

Was Shane okay? No, in fact, this was the worst he had felt in well over half a year. He was usually very well timed on his heats — his meticulous schedule and discipline allowed him to know his body much better than most could learn about themselves in their lifetime. He believed it was all the travel that threw him off. He was no stranger to layovers and delays, but traveling across the country seemed like a very viable reason for his biological clock to have been so askew. With his medication, he only succumbed to his heats around four or five times a year, and they were quick, high and hard like a fever, easy enough to break. This, now, was just an untimely stroke of bad luck, brought on by a time difference of nearly half a day and a hectic couple of days of settling in and adjusting. He could get it out of his system before the first event; missing a couple workouts will probably do him more good than harm, anyway. He just needed to be *alone*.

The problem was that nobody knew. Nobody was *supposed* to know. Which sent Shane into a tailspin, because if Ilya Rosanov, out of all people, knew, he was fucked. Ilya Rosanov. Fucked. Deep floral scent leeching from him, overpowering his cologne, which itself consisted of honey wood, honey like his skin—

"Hollander?" Warning, cautious, connecting the dots in Shane's hesitation to answer.

"Yeah," Shane blurted with an uncharacteristic enthusiasm. His thoughts were swimming; Rozanov was making his head spin. He was probably just getting back from a date— that had to be why he looked so nice. Shane knew the rumors about *the* Ilya Rozanov: mysterious, a girl in every city, a hell of a player, an asshole on the ice. Shane didn't know he'd smell so good, traces of him in the Olympic bubble, lingering on staircases and in corners. It had only been two days since the teams had touched down in Russia, welcomed by a stereotypically broody home team. It felt like Rozanov was everywhere, here in his country.

He opened his mouth to explain, preparing to give his rehearsed excuse for when he was caught up like this: food poisoning, or jet lag, or too much to drink tonight, which was the least likely, but the most explanatory. He has only had to pull out these cards a few times in his hockey career, but he has never had to do it when he was this separated from himself, likely not even a couple hours away from total incoherence. Normally he was able to sneak away for a couple days of privacy way, way, before, days before, when he started to feel a little extra sore and a little more on edge than usual.

It was important to sell his lie to Ilya Rosanov, who everyone loved to hate. For all Shane knew, he could be working closely with tabloids, taking money under the table to expose other players. They were *rivals*, the top players in the world; trust was hard sought in a league like this, and Shane did not trust Rozanov any further than he could throw him. He couldn't know. Shane whimpered. Heat rose in a wave to the very top of his head. His eyes rolled to the back of his head and the only thing that saved him from hitting the floor was Rozanov catching him under the armpits.

"Oof," he heard Rozanov grunt, his voice fading with a terrifying quickness. "Ty ub'yesh' menya. Clumsy boy." And Shane slipped away, away, away.

The first match of the Games was in six days, and Ilya was in his head about it, like a storm hovering over land for way too long, berating everything in its path.

He was in particularly bad spirits for several torrential reasons. The first was that the pressure upon his shoulders to *win* for Russia was starting to become him, sinking into his skin. The second was that he didn't want to play the role of courteous host, which his head coach, Olympic organization committee *whoever-the-fuck*, and international relations specialists insisted upon the entire team. As the captain, he had the most lines in the play they were forced to produce. They had to be extra gracious, doling out smiles and handshakes and answers at ten times the frequency they normally did. It was the last thing Ilya wanted to worry about, and being told to do it made him even less inclined to agree.

He was having a hard time doing it *at all*, anyway, because as soon as the teams touched down and were ushered to their hotels, thousands of athletes roaming the same city as was Ily's *home*, there was something in the air that he couldn't shake away. It was like a candle had been lit, and there was no flame, but Ilya saw it anyway. He ignored it, but he felt it, and it was making his skin buzz. Because of it, could barely focus on keeping one foot in front of him, so he could not think about showing hospitality to their competitors, and he could not think about winning gold so that his dying father would not die disappointed in him.

It was all very, very untimely, but not as untimely as Shane Hollander collapsing into his arms.

It was him. He was the thing undoing Ilya's thoughts. Ilya knew it had to be him, because he had been watching him on the television for years, and his attention was nothing short of *grabbed* even from overseas. Shining brown eyes, round lips, smooth cheeks, pretty in that strong, self-determined way. Fast on the ice, crazy for the puck, kind to everyone he met.

And then he was in Russia, all up and down the streets of the city, dousing the welcoming event held last night at a nearby convention center. The scent was weaving around cars and people like a moving maze. It made Ilya twitchy; it made him annoyed; it made him not want to go outside.

He'd had a dinner that night with his father and a few government officials, which had been strange and off-putting, silence laden with too many swallows of vodka. Ilya had marched back to the hotel frustrated, worked up, and bothered enough that a sweat was budding right beneath his skin, the cold air nearly icy until the black hotel doors slid open, welcoming him in.

Even there, he could smell it, all in the lobby and condensed around the elevators. Could the attendants not smell it? It was abnormal, more potent than the typical scents of omegas and alphas, which were always generally around, easy to go ignore like a gnat in the breeze. But this was *distracting*, even among the hundreds of trafficking feet throughout this hotel. It suffocated Ilya as he pressed open the elevator. It was on his fingers when he rubbed his nose, leaning back against the wall.

It was a bright, citrusy scent, clean, pure, ice cold. It was making Ilya's mouth water. His elevator opened, and the number on the placard read a classy 9, which was definitely not the floor 15 he was staying on. He looked at the illuminated keypad and saw that he had not selected 15 at all.

A chill rocketed up his spine. Here, the scent was so strong that he could nearly touch it. He was beginning to overheat, so he took off his blazer, and he hurried out of the elevator before his mind could have an appropriate thought, which would be anything along the lines of *leaving this alone*.

Ilya didn't know what to do. Rather, his brain didn't, but his body continued to move on its own. Hollander had blacked out only temporarily, so Ilya did not have to completely carry him, but he half-dragged him, supporting his stumbling, loose legs with his arm securely around his back. He struggled through the unlit hotel room with him until he could deposit him on the bed. Great, now the scent was on his clothes-- Ilya's nostrils flared, and he attempted to maintain his cool.

He didn't think Hollander was very aware of anything that was going on, much less the way Ilya's fingers were beginning to tremble, his head feeling airy and tight. Hollander was face-down on the bed, face smushed into the white sheets, nuzzling at it, his hips twitching. He was making short, panting little sounds, his fingers closing around the comforter, tugging. He scooted his knees up under him, and then he was--

Ilya looked away, his throat closing up. "Hollander," he gritted out, and then he fiercely cleared his throat, because he did not want to make him uncomfortable. He took a step back. "I did not know you are an omega?" The scent was so bad, *so good*, that it just had to be a heat. Ilya had been around omegas in heat countless times, had aided them through them countless times, but Shane Hollander, an omega-- not the only one in the sport, not even the only *public* one in the sport, but he was likely the only omega captain, and it was still a shock. He would have guessed he was a beta, or a null, boring as he was.

He could understand why this was coveted information: being an omega in hockey came with it an onslaught of off-topic questions in every direction pinpointing early retirement, homebuilding, child-rearing, ridiculous commentary on their fitness and the distraction they allegedly caused the alpha-dominated sport.

Ilya was certainly distracted, but he did not think that meant that Shane Hollander was less of a fantastic player, or that he didn't deserve to have one of the top slots in the sport. Hell, he probably worked even harder than Ilya, though he would never admit it.

The room was popping and sparking. Hollander wasn't answering him, eyes pinched closed, little shining rivers slipping down the corners of them. Ilya's heart squeezed. He needed to give him privacy. He needed to leave before someone caught wind of them, because the press would be devastating, maybe even career-ending. But it felt wrong to just go. He took a deep breath, blinked through it when his vision fuzzed over, and set down his blazer and Hollander's wallet. He rolled up his sleeves. He chomped anxiously on his gum.

He wondered if he should call someone. Did Hollander's team know? Did he have someone in place for times like this? Ilya had been a designated heat partner a couple times, at least before hockey kicked off and he was no longer in the same city for more than a couple of weeks. That being said, at least he knew how to care for a heat even if he couldn't — wouldn't — fuck it through.

"Do you have someone to call?" Ilya asked loudly, trying to pull Hollander from space. Hollander was still writhing in the sheets like a snake, back twisting, hips lurching, and he was still fully dressed. The least Ilya could do was take his shoes off for him — Hollander seemed fussy about things like that. Bending his fingers as though in preparation to fight, Ilya took a step forward and grabbed Hollander's right ankle, careful as he touched the bone, which was smooth and sharp under his touch. He was holding his breath as he peeled off his tennis shoe to reveal a short gray sock.

This contact seemed to awaken Shane with a gasping breath. He arched his back low, responding to Ilya whether he knew it or not. "No one knows," he sighed. "Rozanov, I need —"

"I cannot fuck you," Ilya tutted, and it was supposed to be a joke, teasing like the comments they sometimes threw at each other when the other was mentioned in interviews, sports journalists looking for a clip they could splice and upload. *Hollander? Like, the country? Why would I care about the country Holland?* It was supposed to be lighthearted, but it came out in an insecure squeak.

Ilya actually hated to say it, he did, because Shane Hollander looked and smelled incredible. Fucking him would open up a can of worms that had already been thrown to concrete and busted — Ilya knew this because his skin was getting tight, and so were his pants. Shane gasped again, such a pretty sound, and Ilya continued through gritted teeth. He took off his other shoe, wishing he could tug him there, get him on his stomach, crawl on top of him. Christ. "I'll get you what you need and I'll go."

He tried to be quick, but he felt like he'd been drugged. Shane stayed on the bed, ruining the covers, twisting them out of their concise grip on the bed. He was murmuring under his

breath, half-dazed things. Ilya ignored him, but it felt like he was doing something wrong. It was actually starting to make him feel sick, but somehow, his limbs moved without needing to deal with the mess in his brain. He went to the bathroom and pulled out all the starchy, neatly folded towels. He spit out his gum in the small bin—he deserved a fucking real cigarette after this. He gathered the extra set of bed sheets. He went to the mini fridge and took out each mini water bottle. He set all of these things close to the bed, and then he wrote down his phone number — it felt important, in case of an emergency, or something like that, in case Hollander came to in a few hours and wondered how the hell he'd gotten here.

“You will be fine,” Ilya attempted to reassure. Back in the bathroom, he took one of the hand towels and dampened it with cold water. The sheets and other towels would be used, he was sure, for whatever nest Hollander would probably build, not as comforting as one he could construct at home, but sufficient for now. This one would be to abate the heat that was likely consuming him. He wrung the towel out, ignoring his shaking fingers like he was ignoring everything else, but when he left the bathroom to give Shane the towel, he could not ignore the fact that now he was on his back, hips in the air, and he was wriggling his sweats off, tight black briefs clinging to him.

It was Ilya's own fault, really, getting himself caught up in this. He hurried to give Shane the cloth, draping it over his perspired forehead. Hollander's puppy-brown eyes opened, wet and blown wide, incoherent, distant. Soft, dark, they landed on him, burning through him, as his hand slipped down the front of his briefs.

“Look at you,” Ilya murmured, caught on the tail end of a curse, mesmerized. There it was, a spike in that fresh citrus smell. This had to be crossing a line, but he couldn't stop. “You look pretty, Hollander. Maybe one day I'll give it to you for real, and I can see how pretty you look, then.”

Slowly, Hollander smiled, a loose and light twitch of his lips. He looked a little pained. His hand plunged lower into his underwear, and he opened his mouth just enough to sigh, “Ilya.” There, like music, like a blade cutting through ice, Shane sang *his name*.

Ilya's jaw fell open. A fire was lit under and in him. He hauled ass out of the hotel room, peeking around the corner and forcing himself away just as Shane was turning back onto his stomach, his ass back in the air, hands pushing down his briefs, down smooth hips, starting down muscled brown thighs. His eyes were closed again, and his mouth was open, lips smushed red. Ilya's entire body burned as he staggered into the hallway, and he would remain this way for the entire Olympics, all the way up until Russia lost.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

wow!! Thank you so much for reading. I appreciate your kudos and comments so much. comments, especially, give me such motivation to keep writing. thank you thank you. again, sorry for any errors. I'm kind of following plot but also doing whatever I want, so I hope you enjoy hehe <3

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

MARCH

Is this really your number?

MARCH

IR?

MARCH

You can't tell anyone.

APRIL

Can you just call me seriously? You can't tell anyone.

APRIL

Please.

MAY

Are you serious?

MAY

You left your fucking jacket.

JUNE

Fuck you.

There were several things wrong. These days, everything was always wrong. Shane had been unsettled for four months straight: up all night, tossing and turning, sleeping in past noon,

which he had never done before in his life. It was the off-season — that was his only saving grace — but he could not get out of his funk despite doubling down on his routine. It was almost always thrown off when he woke up with sour drool in the corners of his mouth, having slept through his seven o'clock morning alarm, and then his seven-fifteen alarm, and then his seven-twenty alarm. He had no appetite for his meal prep and he pretty much meandered around the gym, running and running on the treadmill until he could not stand, collapsing a few minutes after the machine timed out on him.

It was Ilya fucking Rozanov's fault. Shane thought this every afternoon when he finally woke up, and every late night spent staring at the ceiling, recounting the entirety of their first and only interaction. His mind was a minefield as he traced these memories, boring holes into them, passing them through his skull over and over again so that he could almost not recall what was actually real, what was fantasy, and what was fear.

Rozanov had left behind his phone number and his jacket. These were both *problems*, because Rozanov had yet to respond to a single text Shane had sent over the past four months, and because his jacket was hung up in Shane's apartment because there was nothing else to do with it. There was nowhere to mail it—he checked. He didn't want to touch it, because whenever he did, a sort of lightheadedness washed over him. He tried putting it in his closet, hiding it away in the very back, but that only irritated him, filling him with a prickly sensation, more of that overbearing feeling that something was not right. It didn't settle until he pulled it free, resting it on the handle of the closet.

He was snappy and irritable. His off-season, normally spent training and decompressing, was now replaced with an edge he could not shake off despite his best efforts. Like he was just a little bit drunk at all times.

Look at you.

Fact or fantasy? Shane adjusted his bow tie in the mirror, frowning at his reflection. His suit felt like it was sticking to his skin, but this was not heat. He had just had one last month, writhing around his mattress, gazing through tears at the stupid black jacket hanging on the door. He was disciplined enough not to touch it, but not enough to withhold from taking massive breaths through his nose, leeching as much of the toasted scent as he could.

"Look at you," Shane repeated under his breath, trying to imitate the same tone he remembered Rozanov murmuring to him with. This had to be fact. It felt real. Yes, his body was beginning to shimmer like it was real, starting from his toes, tugging at his lips. Though there was a thick haze around it, he did recall Rozanov's luring words. He recalled wanting him. Opening up for him. Moaning into the mattress, thinking about his hands--

Maybe one day I'll give it to you for real.

"Fantasy," Shane sighed, shaking his head, dropping it. "Fantasy." However, the tingling persisted, this time traveling straight up his spine, up to the base of his neck. He rolled his shoulders. He was not surprised that his heat had produced this-- this *dream*, his succumbed mind having wrapped itself around fleeting thoughts about Rozanov: how talented he was, how strong when he'd hoisted him into the bed, how warm his scent was.

“Fuck you, Rozanov,” he spat at the mirror, baring his teeth. Now, he was practicing. He had been pissed for months. The proper thing to do was to thank him for not taking advantage of him, blah, blah, omega cordialities, but that was not enough for Shane, not after Rozanov hadn’t responded to any of his text messages, leaving him to feel dumb and frightful after each one sent, after each Google search he’d made to see if any information had been leaked. He had typed *Shane Hollander breaking news* and *omega hockey news* and *Winter Olympics omega* and *Shane Hollander secret* so many times that he was now worried that he was about to give himself away from running up the analytics. He was sick over it. *Fear*.

It was all Rozanov’s fault.

He *was* thankful that Rozanov had helped him to his hotel room, but he felt almost rejected, which made him feel worse, which made him angrier. It was never a good thing to present in heat to an alpha and then get ghosted, even if he hadn’t been propositioning him in the first place. He wondered what was wrong with him. Did Rozanov really just hate him? Were the quips and jabs he threw at him during the sport based in truth? Was Shane the worst omega in the world, hiding himself so much that now *nobody* saw him? *Fear*. He adjusted his tie again in the mirror and checked the sleeves of his suit and blinked until the burning in his eyes subsided.

“Fuck you, Rozanov,” he chanted as he pocketed his belongings and geared up to leave the hotel room. It was a pleasant, warm night in Los Angeles, and after the draft, there were plans to drink the night away with his team, hopping around to clubs and bars until they dropped. He was not going to let that fun fall away even with his stomach churning with anxiety. “Fuck you, Rozanov,” he repeated, because he was going to tell him that tonight when he saw him for the first time since the Olympics, for the second time ever. *Fuck you*. Only that.

He met his parents in the lobby. They looked great, dressed like they were going to a ball rather than a drafting ceremony. They made a big deal out of these things, likely reminiscing when it was their son awaiting his hockey fate. Instantly, his mother touched two fingers to his temple. “Are you alright, honey? You’re pale. Haven’t you eaten? I told you we should have gone to dinner.”

“I feel great,” Shane chirped, lying through his goddamn teeth and hoping she didn’t feel it when he kissed her cheek. He swiped her hands away and pulled out his phone to order the Lyft to the event hall. “I’m excited. Let’s go.”

He spent the entire ceremony peering around the dark room as if someone was hunting him, hardly glancing at the stage to welcome the new prospects to the League. He knew he was here. He knew it. His body knew it. His leg was twitching and he was itching; his suit was too tight, or too loose, or too *something*. He could also smell him. His nose was plenty used to alpha scents and their overbearing notes, wood and coal and mint, but they felt more subdued than usual, making room for marshmallow and the natural, strong scent of petals. When he inhaled too deeply, the room spun, and his mouth wetted.

Shane squirmed in his seat and checked his phone in ten minute intervals, dimming the glow of a notification-less screen. At this point, he had resigned to the fact that Rozanov was never going to respond. He had given him his number and ghosted him just to fuck with him. He had only been nice for those five minutes, he supposed, probably because he pitied him, and

everything else about him was true: standoffish, rude, fucking around for fun, getting off on other's discomfort. Maybe that was all it had been. Maybe that was all it was. And now, at the draft, he was haunting him, just like how his jacket was haunting him. Shane had packed it like the idiot he was, folding it neatly, to return. He should have burned it.

Shane's heart was racing. As a smattering of applause filled the conference hall, he slipped out of his seat and to the bathroom, loosening his collar with a finger. "Fuck you, Rozanov," he murmured under his breath, practicing, chanting it because this was all his fucking fault. "*Fuck you, Rozanov.*"

He pushed himself into the bathroom and locked himself in a stall. He paced the small cubicle, taking a deep breath -- great, it smelled like shit in here, but at least it did not smell like much of anything else. He checked his phone for texts he knew would not be there. He didn't want to admit it, but he was *sad*. He didn't need Rozanov to want him, or anything, but why didn't he? He was embarrassed. Out of all the people in the world to fall into heat around, it had been Rozanov, and he had the nerve to want him to want him. He closed his eyes and thought through the entire night again. Rozanov had barely touched him. He had been so far away. *You look pretty, Hollander*. That had to be fake. He shook his head and started from the top.

This would not be his life if he were an alpha. He was jealous of the lackadaisical approach he believed they could so easily adopt: they could fuck around, leave, navigate through the world and through hockey with the favor of every coach, investor, sponsor, and fan. They weren't weakened like Shane felt he was, warm and clammy in the stall, not knowing why he was this way, only knowing that it was a *problem*.

"Fuck you, Rozanov," he whispered into his hands as he covered his face, and he continued chanting those three words like a spell, getting angrier and angrier, sadder and sadder, more and more embarrassed and *scared*. Behind his eyelids he saw gold that was getting bright, very strangely *bright*--

The bathroom door swung open and slammed against the wall.

"Fuck," Shane gasped, scrabbling for purchase, wanting to faint, his senses blocking up.

--

"Get out," Ilya barked before he could stop himself. There was no answer, but Ilya could smell him. All he could fucking do was smell him and think of him and want him. "Stop fucking with me, Hollander," he ground out, curling his hands into fists, resisting slapping the bathroom stall or gripping it and shaking it. Fuck. He took a deep breath to calm himself but smacked his palm over his nose and mouth when the smell of citrus burned his eyes and sinuses. "Please," slipped out, muffled.

Shane burst from the stall with a fervor that Ilya had never seen before, much less known that Hollander was even capable of doing it. He was all Canadian soft, kind, gentle, the perfect picture of camaraderie and dedication. Now, he was decidedly angry, pink all over, Christ, pink in the ears and nose and neck.

“Fuck you, Rozanov,” Hollander shrieked as well as he could in a whisper, and he did not meet Ilya’s gaze as he stepped past him—creating a wide, dramatic arc—and stormed from the bathroom. His eyes were wide, such a nice shade of brown, filled with frustration. Ilya followed him out, grabbed the arm of his jacket. “Let go of me,” Hollander insisted, his voice going all shrill, and Ilya let go as though he’d been burned.

“Okay, okay, yes,” he prattled quickly, holding his palms in the air. Something was wrong with Shane, and Ilya would be beside himself if he put him in a worse position. He had already been fretting for months that he had done something wrong back then, crossed a line, caused discomfort. He had drafted and deleted about a trillion texts in response to him, sufficing with nothing because it all felt hard, and not saying anything at all was easiest. He knew it was wrong. Now Hollander was flirting his scent around as revenge, or something, as if Ilya was ever able to leave the night he found him in front of his door.

“Wait,” he frowned. He watched Hollander walk down the hallway, tried not to look at his hips or the way his suit fit around his torso. “Fuck me? Why fuck me? I helped you?” He was worried, worried, worried.

“You ghosted me.” Hollander didn’t turn around; in fact, he quickened his pace. Ilya picked up his own stride. They were going in the opposite direction of the event hall, down an endless space with doors leading to supply closets and maintenance rooms. Where the hell was Hollander going? Wherever it was, he was leaving behind a wave of his scent, which Ilya felt like he was having to swim through with weights tied to his wrists and ankles. “I’ve been texting you for months.” Much more quietly, he was murmuring, “This is so fucking dumb, this is so fucking dumb.”

“Hollander,” Ilya breathed. He jogged a few steps forward and pressed a palm to Hollander’s back, crowding up behind him, then cutting in front of him, slowing him, slowing him. Hollander shook his head, reeling back and back until his back hit the wall and there was nowhere else for him to go. They were sheltered in a nook in the hallway, behind where the wall jutted out to accommodate a water fountain.

“Rozanov,” Hollander said quietly, his chin tilted high and away, eyelashes beating rapidly over wide, dark brown irises. He had his hands on Ilya’s chest but had not pushed him away, which made Ilya’s heart beat in his ears. Here, so close, Ilya could smell him so well that he could practically taste him, ultra sweet on his tongue. He took one, two, three indulgent breaths, not caring if Hollander could tell, filling himself up with him until everything fuzzed around the edges. “Stop doing that, Rozanov.” He *could* tell.

“What am I doing bad?” Ilya felt drugged, and it was affecting his English. If he leaned forward just a little more, he could put his nose right in Hollander’s neck, which he should have done four months ago, just a taste. If he could do whatever he wanted, which he had never been able to do in his entire life, he could bite him a little, make his knees buckle like they had when they met.

“You’re scenting me.” Meek, forced through gritted teeth. Hollander sounded surprised, and he also sounded breathless. “We’re...you’re...I’m...” And confused, and kind of precious, and so pretty Ilya ached. “We’re in public, Rozanov, you gotta stop.”

The words were entering Ilya's ears too slowly. This was how he had been for months: slow, disoriented, like he was missing something, like something had been shelled out of him. But, shit, he wasn't trying to scent him, or maybe, subconsciously, he was, because Hollander had been killing him for months but he couldn't stand to see him so wound up and upset with him. "Don't say that," he sulked. "Don't call me that. Call me what you did that night."

Hollander's eyes rolled up toward the ceiling, warm and wet. "I don't know what you're talking about," he whispered so faintly.

Ilya didn't believe him, but on the chance that his heat had blocked this part from him, he wanted to remind him. "Ilya," he said, drawing out the syllables like it was not his own name. It wasn't, not until Hollander said it. He took him by the chin, gently, and turned his head, pink lips puckered up in his hold. Those eyes fluttered to him and took his breath away. "And I will call you *Shane*."

"You ignored me, *Ilya*," Shane slowly said, speech slurred a little bit with his lips smushed. His gaze, his *everything*, had gone so soft. He looked tired, and he had gone slack against the wall. Ilya burned knowing he had done this to him. He didn't go around just scenting anyone, as it was societally taboo, but he couldn't resist, and he was being very cautious of any signs of distress. All he found, right in his hand, was a sullen omega. "I texted you almost every week."

"I know. I am sorry." The Olympic loss had hit Ilya more than he'd expected it to, namely because he was still convinced it was Shane's fault. After getting Shane in his nose, he couldn't think, could barely eat. He could tell when Shane played, his scent leaving remnants on the ice, in the locker rooms used by every competing team. Every text that sat in his phone filled him with dread, but Shane had deserved a response. "That's why you are so upset with me? The only reason?"

"I'm not— I thought—" Shane shook his head. "I was embarrassed. I was scared you're going to tell someone."

"Ah." The omega secret, yes. Ilya wasn't terrible—he would never reveal something like that. For all he was concerned, it was really none of his business, except for the fact that it was very quickly becoming entirely his business, because he could not get Shane out of his head. If he was better at communicating, he would tell him that he was put out of commission because of that night: couldn't play, couldn't fuck, couldn't breathe. When he closed his eyes, he saw Shane on the bed with his ass up, or sitting in his lap, moving his hips back and forth, quickly, like he needed him. He was buying liters of lemonade and orange juice just to get a bit of him, licking his lips, licking his fingers, touching himself. "I would not tell anyone such boring information," he hummed, squeezing his fingers just slightly. Deflecting.

Shane's lip trembled, and Ilya was wracked with terror. "It's fine if you don't want me," the omega squeaked, "but you don't have to be a dick about it."

"What?" Ilya wanted to laugh, but Shane looked too sad to be fucking with him. He wanted him. He wanted him here, *now*, if he could, wanted to taste him, wanted his teeth to hurt with him on his tongue. He opened his mouth, closed it, opened it again, baffled that anyone in the world would not want Shane. He licked his lips, and the humming of the coolant to the water

fountain briefly distracted him. They needed to get back—they needed to get out of this hallway before they were seen, before Ilya started saying more than he could handle. “Are you going out tonight?” he asked in a rush.

Shane blinked, and his eyebrows knitted tightly together. “Yes?”

“Will you dance?”

Shane rolled his eyes. Across the bridge of his nose, red seeped in among the canvas of his freckles. He jerked his head free of Ilya’s grasp but otherwise didn’t budge. “I don’t dance.”

Ilya tutted. “Will you if I am watching?”

“Jesus Christ.” Shane scoffed. He chewed at his lip until Ilya was staring at it, wanting it between his teeth, against his own. “I—I don’t even know where we’re going or what time.”

That was no matter. Ilya reached out to touch him again but instead put his hands into his pockets and took a small step back. He had to. For now. Fuck, he needed a cigarette. “I will find you. And when you can tell that I’m there, like I can tell when you are around, you’ll dance for me. Will you?”

Shane snapped to it, maybe at the confession that Ilya can smell him everywhere. Finally given the space to, he bolted away and down the hall, straightening out his suit with fidgeting hands. Ilya didn’t know he was flighty like this, but he thought it was kind of sexy. It made him want to chase him, earn him, own him. “No,” Shane asserted over his shoulder, his voice echoing, but his scent was too pure, too sweet and loud, stinking up the place, telling Ilya otherwise.

He smiled.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading!

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

uh oh you know it's serious when the chapters get long...this fic is running and I'm trying to catch it. hope you like it :-)

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

The club was loud, and Shane hated Ilya Rozanov. He was nursing his second ginger ale and vodka by the VIP table his teammates were given, and the bartender had been so generous with the liquor that it was burning Shane's throat with each antsy sip he took. He gnawed on the little black straw, nudging it around his mouth with his tongue. He pretended he wasn't waiting, waiting, waiting. He kept tuning back into his conversations with a blurted *Huh?* His teammates were slapping him, horsing around with him, overwhelming him, telling him he needed to get laid, find a *mousy little omega to plow*.

He bobbed his head to the music, throwing smiles at his friends when they jostled him, drunk on their own fun and drinks. There were bodies everywhere; the club was dark and thick with the heady smell of sweat and too many scents. It was loud. It was fun, yes, fun enough, but Shane was overheating, getting knocked around even in his VIP section, holding his drink up so that it wouldn't spill all over him.

He was waiting. He didn't like that he was. He told himself that he wasn't. He was twitchy on his feet, breathless. He couldn't stop; his body was on a completely different track from his mind, the two diverging further and further apart until there was just one line running endlessly in opposite directions. What was he doing waiting around for a stupid alpha? Ilya Rozanov, of all people, who ghosted him and then cornered him, wrapped his big hand around his face, rendered him completely helpless, reeking, making Shane clench his legs together.

Well, he wasn't going to dance. He wasn't going to parade around for a stupid alpha who didn't even want him. That was pathetic. It was embarrassing. Desperate. There were entire industries based on omegas showing themselves off, exploitive, yes, but lucrative, empowering—but that had nothing to do with Shane. Just because he was an omega, just because *Ilya* knew he was an omega, didn't mean he was suddenly going to operate like one.

He sucked the rest of his drink down, then he slithered down from their section, through jumping bodies to the bar, to order another one. Above him, the lights were a spooky shade of purple-black, pulsing through the artificial fog that hidden machines churned out.

Alphas rarely approached him. He supposed it was the suppressants, of which he took on schedule daily, popping them happily on his tongue, knowing he'd have another day of flying under the radar as an omega in a predominantly alpha space. He preferred it that way, and he

respected the few omegas in the league who were true to themselves, honest, taking the heat--literally--with a puffed chest. Occasionally, an alpha blinked at him, confused, maybe tripped up by his scent and the mask over it, but usually they found their way on, because if Shane wasn't already as muted as he was, he intentionally behaved against his instincts. He didn't draw attention to himself. He kept his head and shoulders down. He didn't give into the craving that constantly swirled in his lower stomach. He denied it, just like he was going to deny Ilya even when something in him cried. He didn't mind it, but he was pointedly dismissing the invisible but ever-present cavern in him.

He thanked the bartender for his drink and sipped it carefully, turning to face the crowd. It was just after midnight, and even though this was only their first stop, Shane was already pretty winded. Sweat rolled down the sides of his neck and into the collar of his tastefully tight shirt. His jeans were uncomfortable. He wasn't trying to show off, he wasn't, but it was natural to want to look good. Of course it was. He hoped he did.

Shane knew Ilya had arrived when a chill came over him despite the club being so hot that the floor was slippery with condensation. He felt and smelled like clogged air, fresh flowers, stinky in that sweet, natural way. Shane's brain short-circuited, skipping and smoking, and even though he perceived the presence almost as a threat, his body treated it in the exact opposite way. It wanted Ilya. It wanted to show off for him, wherever he was. He hated that about him and about himself.

Shane continued nodding his head, taking a few uneasy swallows of his third drink. He was tipsy enough for everything to feel light, but Ilya's looming presence made everything heavier. It made everything harder. Shane's breath came a little quicker and it felt like the bodies in here had tripled. He thought about Ilya grabbing him, urging him against the wall, a gentle pull and push that had caused him to forget where and who he was. His mouth began to water, so he drowned it with alcohol.

He wasn't going to give Ilya what he wanted. No, that would be the *omega* thing to do. He didn't obey. He didn't *submit*. He didn't fall for any alpha that used an assertive enough voice on him — except for that one time, in the hotel. And again in the bathroom tonight. Those were mere flukes, and tonight, if he was going to dance at all, which he *wasn't*, it was going to be because he wanted to, not because anyone would be watching him.

If Ilya really wanted him, he would have asked to dance with him, himself. He would put his hands on his hips, and maybe Shane would crowd back against his chest, leaning back against him, letting himself move from the bottom to the top. He would shimmy his shoulders, crane his neck to the side so Ilya could rest his perfect lips right where his skin was the thinnest.

How was Shane even supposed to dance by himself? He hadn't done it before. He was too insecure to ever consider such a thing. He was not one of those confident omegas; he couldn't be confident when he was hiding that he was one at all. He wished he was. He envied those who were so sure of themselves. He supposed he could shake his shoulders, like he would if he were with Ilya, weaving his head slowly to the beat. He closed his eyes, lips wrapping around the little black straw.

He could smell him. It was loud, stuffing Shane up, toasted and sweet. He tried not to smile, but his muscles flickered all on their own, until his lips were curled up into a smile, his hand tossing the rest of his drink back down his throat. He let the small cup slip, empty, between his fingers and onto the floor, crushed almost immediately by bouncing bodies.

He rocked with the beat. The songs were seemingly mashed together, sultry and fast, sexy. Shane blamed his movement on them — how could he not dance when the beat was in his entire body, shaking him? This was outside of his normal repertoire of music; he played classical music before games and rainforest sounds before bed. Sometimes he listened to a podcast at the gym. If he was dancing with Ilya, he would lift his arms in the air, and he would shake his hips in time with each beat-- nothing crazy, just enough to feel it in his ribs. He did each of these things, experimentally, like a baby bird flapping around. Ilya's scent was wrapped around him, encouraging him, nudging him. It tied around his wrists and ankles and guided him like a puppet. The bodies were nudging him too, submerging him in the sea of their rampant inhibitions, making it all seem a little more freeing, a little more careless.

At the draft ceremony, pressed up against the wall in that hallway, he had been weakened, drowsy. Here was the next best thing. Shane breathed him in through his mouth, getting drunk on him. It worked faster than any amount of alcohol.

Two songs played through, four, five. By now, Shane was jumping up and down, shouting lyrics in the faces of strangers and other hockey players, hockey *colleagues*, men whose names left him. Arms were thrown over shoulders; their feet were leaving the ground. His cheeks hurt from grinning and his hair was plastered by sweat to his forehead. He guessed he did know some of the songs, popular on social media, popular from his past, rooted firmly in his nostalgia. He was loose. He was floating, all hazy in the mind, sugar on his tongue. He was so happy.

Ilya.

Was it him? Was he doing this?

“Hello?”

“What?” Shane hollered, blinking, his eyes crossing as he focused on the hand waving across his face. Hayden probably would have been pissed at him if he weren't so drunk, wild in his eyes, beaming.

“We're about to head down the street to Club 54!” he shouted over the blasting music, his voice hoarse. “We're just gonna go close the tab. Let's roll.”

“I'll close it!” Shane offered too quickly. He patted Hayden roughly on the back. It made his palms sting, and his shirt was damp, sticky, overwhelming to his senses. “You guys go ahead. I'll see you there.”

Shane watched his teammates leave, bouncing his head enthusiastically still, even though it was pounding. He fought his way back to the bar, extending his hand with his credit card dangling between two fingers. He was getting sucked into the crowd, deeper and deeper, and he *wanted* to dance. His feet were stomping. What had come over him? The fire on his skin

was beginning to cook him, bringing him to a content, humming simmer. When his card was returned to him, he didn't have time to pocket it before there was a harsh hand on his wrist, pulling him, *yanking* him so fast that he only had time to grin like a drunken dolt and stumble along. He was not afraid, hardly even startled. He knew who it was. He'd smelled him when he was getting closer and closer. Sensed him.

He gathered himself by the time Ilya pulled him through a side door to the alleyway. Here they were, always escaping with each other. He was kind of pissed about it this time, because he had just gotten these shoes and didn't want to be near anything that rotted and puddled in an alleyway, but it made it easier to remember to be mad at Ilya. He contorted his lips into a shaky frown.

"Ow, Ilya, you're really fucking rough," he breathed, a little turned on about it, squinting through the dark. Before him, Ilya looked-- hell, he was half-rabid, his eyes all large and crystal clear, deep, deep black. It made Shane take another breath, more suffocated than he had been inside the club. It was not so silent out here, as traffic could be heard on the street, but the difference was so stark that Shane's ears were ringing.

"You were dancing for me," Ilya panted, sounding disbelieving, like he was watching someone land on the moon. He was not touching Shane, but it felt like he was. He was so *heavy*, and Shane was nervous. He was nervous in a way that made his legs shake as he turned hot all over. He was nervous in a way that made him care about how he looked, how he smelled, how he *was*. He could not remember preening over himself like this before.

"I was not," he fired back before he could realize that it was a total fucking lie. Did Ilya think he looked good? Had he watched him from above, high up on the second floor, or from the side, vision narrowed past the strange bodies around them? Why the fuck did Shane care? *How?* "I was dancing because I wanted to."

"You wanted to dance for me." Ilya looked pleased, which made Shane glow, light emitting from a space in his chest he had not known was there. Ilya reached up and patted his cheek with a firm, calloused hand, a solid tap that rocked Shane's inner ears. "You are a good boy, Shane Hollander."

Shane clenched his teeth to thwart a whimper. Ilya was so fucking annoying, mocking him. "You don't know that," he insisted, his defense a little weak, but damn if he didn't try. He reached up and wiped his forehead. He was sweating so much. "You don't know me." At all. They didn't know a damn thing about each other, but they kept crossing, kept meeting, following each other's trails.

"I know you look good and play good and smell so good," Rozanov told him in a husky rush, like a fact, like a dire confession.

Shane shivered, feeling— *soggy*, stomach twisting up, legs shifting, thighs clenching. He was giddy as fuck, and it was making him sick. This didn't happen to him. It didn't happen. "Play-- play *well*. It's *well*." He squeezed his eyes shut. The last thing he needed was to be lecturing Ilya on his English. It was really quite good, his English, his accent tilting the Earth on its axis, slipping right into Shane's pores, burrowing in there. He had always found it

irresistible, playing back interviews to hear his rolling letters, to see the careless expressions he made, like his hard work was nothing to him, as natural as blinking.

Ilya considered this with his lips twisted up into a good-natured smirk. His eyes shone. “No, I don’t think so. Does not make sense, Mr. English Teacher.” He shook his head. “You do not make sense.”

Shane was lost for words. He felt strange and lightheaded. What was Ilya doing to him? “I know—um, by the way, Rozanov, you really can’t tell anyone, that I’m an omega.” He felt like he was going to throw up saying it out loud. He was both stone cold sober and simultaneously drunker than he’d ever been in his life. Thinking about their *problem* made him start to shake—just the thought of anyone knowing he was an omega was enough to make him panic completely. “I’ll do anything. I’ll do anything if you—if you just won’t tell.”

“Relax.” Ilya took a step closer. “You will do anything just so I will not tell your secret?” They were the same height, pretty much, but Shane felt like he’d shrunk. Under Ilya’s gaze, he was shrinking, but he didn’t mind it, because he was warm here, sheltered under his golden gaze. “Really?”

Shane frowned, confused at his awe. His mind screamed as it was slipping away. His body felt loose, his limbs melting into static. It felt like Ilya was making fun of him, but Shane didn’t feel guilty or embarrassed. He felt watched. He felt seen completely through. “Yes.”

Ilya made a low, pleasant, rumbling sound in his throat. He placed one hand on Shane’s waist, hardly anything, mostly *nothing*, but Shane’s heart pittered until he was gasping. “You *are* a good boy,” Ilya drawled factually. When Shane ducked his head, lowering his eyes, Ilya bent down slightly to catch them with his own, luring them back up, making Shane so easy, following him. “You are, aren’t you?” His voice was softer now, lost in the pulse that came from the walls of the club, and also from Shane’s heart.

Shane swayed and was drawn back to the present when Ilya’s hand tightened around his waist. He nodded his head. He wanted to be, anyway. He couldn’t help it.

“I will not tell your secret.” They were so close, now, that their noses were practically touching. Shane resisted tilting his head up and out, wanting to taste Ilya. Ilya shook his head emphatically and stammered a little as he said, “Never,” with a fierceness in the syllables.

Shane searched his face. Ilya was sweating, too, right at his upper lip. Shane dared to think that the very same way Ilya was making him feel, was being reciprocated in full. He wondered if he had that power. The logistics didn’t make sense, because he was on suppressants, and an alpha had never approached him in this way before, but Shane wasn’t in a position to think logically. “Just like that?” he whispered, hesitant. “You don’t want me to do...anything?”

“What would you do?” Ilya smiled a little. “What would you do so that I won’t tell anybody?” His voice dropped a few octaves, trapping Shane in his spell. “Would you do anything I asked?”

Shane swallowed thickly. He nodded, because he would. It meant that much to him.

“Would you take my key and go to my hotel? Two streets away, would you walk?” He asked this with a smile, almost like he was telling a joke, his eyes squinted up just a little. Shane never knew he would ever get close enough to Ilya to see the lines etched in his skin.

He nodded without thinking very much about it at all.

Ilya watched him for a treacherously long moment, until Shane was ready to make a sound, something gurgling up in his throat, something that he only usually emitted when he was alone, releasing everything he kept pent up otherwise on the ice and in reality. Ilya tilted his head. His lips bent into an expression of focus. “Would you...leave the door cracked and...wait for me on your knees?”

Shane’s breath caught. *What?* He nodded again, his head sinking like a stone.

Ilya pulled him closer by the waist. Shane had to turn his head in order to keep from kissing him, facing the stretch of the alleyway. Opposing this instinct felt like something was ripping from him, like he was ripping something away from *himself*. It hurt, throbbed. “Words,” Ilya goaded smoothly, a little demanding, a little demeaning.

“Yes,” Shane verbalized laboredly. This felt better than having the attention of an entire room. This felt better than commanding a team. He loved that, he did, but he loved *this*. Taking control was easy. Giving it up was a fight, a forfeit. It demanded him to be honest. The adrenaline was different than what coursed through him at the height of a hockey match. On the ice, he *was* the electricity—with the alpha, it felt like he was getting shocked, turned around, turned out. He looked at him. “If you want me to, Ilya.”

“Fuck,” Ilya sighed, and the latter half of the word was pressed right into Shane’s mouth as Ilya kissed him. Shane’s mind had gone kaput, lost ages ago, but that did not mean his entire body lacked the ability to push itself against the warmth of Ilya’s lips and body. The kiss was wet, slow, measured. They paired the scents that they now knew with what they tasted on each other, and Ilya’s hands were on his jaw, sweeping him in, moving Shane where he wanted him. Shane kissed and kissed until small noises left him with each slide of their lips, pathetic, whimpery little things.

Ilya pulled away with everything, but his lips were last. He was breathing heavily, sucking all of the oxygen from the atmosphere. His demeanor had grown dark, anticipatory, and Shane swallowed, touching his numb mouth with numb fingers. He couldn’t believe it. Ilya dug in his pocket for his hotel key. “Go. Sunset Marquis is the name. Start. Text your team that you went to bed.”

“Um.” Had Shane misunderstood? He couldn’t think properly. He rapidly retraced his steps like he always did. Dancing, dancing, following, kissing, *kissing*. The alley reeked of still water and roses. Everything was real. It was all right here. “Aren’t you coming with me?” He burned crimson, too hot.

“Start,” Ilya repeated. His shoulders were squared, tense, jaw tight, like he was drawn up or *resisting*. “You, go. I will follow, and when I catch you, *ya sdelayu tebya svoim*.”

Shane didn't know what that meant. He was so delirious that he probably wouldn't have understood it even if Ilya had spoken to him in full English. Whatever it was, he wanted it. His body wanted it, because it moved down the alley and out into the street, growing wet and needy and so unlike himself, but also, strangely, at equilibrium. He didn't know the game, but he knew how to play.

Chapter End Notes

let me know what you think pleaseeee <3

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for reading. sorry for any errors <3

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

Ilya lit a cigarette before he started following Shane, because he really fucking needed it. He kept his feet measured, slower than Shane's quick, antsy pace. The omega moved the very same way during a game, always trying to get to the next place, swift but sometimes impatient, which failed him when he was checked out of nowhere. He was overcalculating, moving too quickly to catch his opponents' motives, slammed against the wall, thrown into it.

Ilya didn't mind when he lost him. It was a perfect weekend by L.A. standards, and he supposed the whole city thought so, too, because people flooded the sidewalks, beautifully dressed women and handsomely dressed men, sweet, sharp omegas and deep, satisfied alphas. He did not get lost in the headlights and glowing signs and bright outfits even though he did see them, he did, the City of Angels, for sure.

He had his hands in his pockets and a crisp cigarette in the corner of his mouth. With even, slow breaths, he knew he shouldn't be smoking as much as he knew that he shouldn't be following Shane to his hotel room. He should not have *kissed him*. That had been his wrongdoing, his ultimate one, after all the other stuff, all the scenting and watching. But there Shane had been, eyes all large and full of space, begging for something to fill it. Ilya had something for him, if that was something he wanted, and Ilya was watching him want it now. Nervous, skittish like he was, rushing.

He stepped through the crowd the same way his attention had parsed through the dancing bodies at the club. Shane was mesmerizing— that was all there was to it. Ilya had watched him, and watched him, and studied him: he was firm with his teammates, standing up straight, smile pinned wide. When he was alone, he wove like a note in a chord. When he was with Ilya, he— Ilya did not know a word in English or in Russian that described what became him then. Loose, light. Bright *light*.

Ilya was calm now, but he was wired, riding a buzz that had first come to him by drink, sipping at the liquor with Shane's silhouette distorting from behind his crystal glass, but now there was a scent plugged so firmly in his nose that it filled his bloodstream. He wanted it. Needed it. He knew Shane wanted it. He could *feel* that he *needed* it, potent down the street. Ilya closed his eyes, and he could still feel Shane. He had to have him.

He was swift and impolite, nudging through people, ignoring calls for attention with puffs of cigarette smoke. He flicked it away and lit one more, a treat, a *special occasion*. He was in

his hotel in under ten minutes, striding up the stairs two at a time even when his nose led him to the elevator. He imagined Shane in one, staring at the ceiling, toying with his phone, shaking fingers struggling to accurately type to his teammates that he was not feeling well, or he was tired. And he knew that those shaking fingers were paired with slick thighs, slippery and warm, because Ilya could smell that, too. He headed down his floor with his hands in his pockets.

The door was deadbolted, propped open just a hair. Ilya could not believe that it had not been stormed by every alpha in the hotel-- in fact, heat and fire flared in Ilya's gut at the mere idea. It pulsed, spreading, multiplying by tens. What was Shane doing to him?

He took a heavy breath full of citrus and ice. It dizzied him, but it felt good, like carbonation in his head. With his fingertips, he opened the door, and there, in the center of the room in front of the bed, on his knees, was Shane Hollander, the *omega*.

Christ.

It made so much sense when he saw him, waiting for him, legs folded beneath him, bottom resting in a simple seat made of his ankles. He was not spread wide and assuming, nor with his ass up—Ilya did not think he would be, but there was something about him that just made so much sense. His hands were in his lap, folded like he was holding something in them. Who else had seen him like this? There was tension in the room. Ilya knew to break it. Somehow, he knew.

“You didn’t tell me the room number,” Shane told him, ornery, displeased. The air simmered with it like boiling pavement. “I had to ask. I had to give your name. It was embarrassing.”

“Forty-twenty-three,” Ilya dripped, not really very sorry, because he was here, now, and so was Shane. They were so alone, the only two in existence. He stepped forward, head angled down to take him in.

“Yeah, I know that.” Shane rolled his eyes. He was blushing bright red, and his hair was pushed out of his face. Ilya pictured him sliding open the hotel room door; he could smell his scent in the bathroom. He’d cleaned himself up, made himself nice and soft, and then he got on his knees. Ilya was drowning in him. “This was probably a mistake.” He didn’t move.

“Probably,” Ilya agreed, hardly able to hear his own voice over his racing heart. He unfastened his belt, pulling it free from its loops with an easy slide. Shane’s eyes unfocused, subtle but torrential.

“Tell me what your heat is like,” Ilya instructed. He could feel himself stalling, a bad habit of his, taking too long to act because he did not want to move too fast, lest it fall out from under him. Meanwhile, he was growing hot all over, pressure sizzling all throughout him.

“I already had one,” Shane revealed like he was getting caught for it, fingers flexing in his lap, a jerky little twitch. Ilya studied him. He was different on the ice, different in front of others. When he was alone, there was a gradual unfolding. His charm failed him, the quips and compliments he could pass to any interviewer breaking down into rushed movements and venomous vulnerability. “I’m not sure why I’m so— I know I probably stink— I’m just—“

“Flustered, wet, overheated,” Ilya listed off like ingredients to a recipe. He nodded. “You smell like heaven. Like an omega.”

Shane averted his eyes, shifting on his knees. Uncomfortable. Squirming. “Why are you doing this?” he murmured.

Ilya needed another cigarette. He had been trying to stop, but that had all gone to hell months ago. “Because I want to fuck you like an omega and I want you to love it. Have you ever had that?”

Shane’s silence was brief, yet vast enough for Ilya to fret that he had been too forward. “I’ve had sex, Ilya, yes,” he eventually replied, so sweet and good, looking down at his lap. Not lying, but so timid. Citrus spiked in the air. He was turning redder.

“Not what I am asking.” Ilya swallowed, desiring, maintaining a casual nonchalance while churning inside. “Have you been fucked like an omega? Until you dropped?”

Shane shook his head. “I haven’t—I’ve never—” He looked up at Ilya, but the alpha said nothing, did nothing, waiting for him to finish. Shane took a shaking breath. “I’ve only been with betas. Everyone thinks I am one. No one knows but my parents.” His voice dropped to a pinpoint, and he closed his eyes, took another deep breath, his stupid meditation shit that had been printed about in articles with *Hockey’s Nicest Guy*. “I haven’t...no. I haven’t.”

“Would you let me?” Ilya wasn’t sure what it was. He had enjoyed an omega or five or eight or twenty throughout his mature life, and they came and went, only occasionally frequenting. Men and women alike, they were enticing, yes, but Shane felt different. He supposed it was the surprise of it all, the *knowing*. Ilya wanted it to be his—it was tangible, something to be taken, something that Shane not only possessed, but *was*. He wanted him at his core. He wanted Shane to trust him almost more than he wanted to fuck him. It pulled at him, something internal. “Let me have you?” It was asking a lot. Although it didn’t feel like it at all, they had only just met.

But Shane blinked at him, brown, soupy eyes. “Yes.”

Ilya took a step forward; Shane’s chin rose. “Do you know what it is like? To drop like that? I have always wondered.” He had seen it, though not in front of his very eyes—it was something reserved, a state only achieved in either extreme care or in extreme neglect, two poles that depended on the intentions of the one taking them there. Omegas could be protective over it, guarded, and for good reason.

Shane’s hesitance was palpable. Ilya could see the gears churning in his head, over and over. It looked like that on the ice. It looked exhausting. He understood it. “Um...maybe like floating, or—like you’re not where you are. Your body is somewhere and your mind is somewhere else. I think. I don’t know.” He shook his head, taking interest in the television like it was on. The room was so devoid of sound that Ilya swore he could hear Shane’s jackrabbit pulse.

“Does that scare you?” Ilya asked, attuned to him.

Shane snapped like a twig, his smooth face disrupted by bunching eyebrows and red-patched cheeks. “What are you interrogating me for?” he demanded. “Do you want me to start asking you all these questions about you being an alpha?”

Ilya almost wanted to smile. He felt bad that he had struck a sour note, but he appreciated seeing that fire in him. “I would answer them,” he said calmly. “Do you not wish you were one?”

“No.” Shane gripped his knees. “I don’t want to be an alpha. I’d be okay with being a beta or a null. It just seems easier. I just...” his eyes were searching, frantic, darting in narrow points across Ilya’s face. “Can I get up now if we’re not gonna—?”

“We are gonna.” The last word didn’t sound right coming from him, too deep, silly English slang. Shane had him so caught, he was mirroring the way he spoke. They were *going to*. Sometimes, Ilya missed perfect windows because he got caught up in the spectacle of it all, juggling the puck, wanting to instill pride in everyone who was watching, ignorant of what was actually *right in front of him*: an icy goal, a stunning omega. “Come here. Do not get up.” He beckoned him. “Come take what you want.”

“I’m not gonna...,” Shane sighed, but then the world halted when he leaned forward and began to crawl. Slow, easy, as though he was aching with it. Did the carpet feel rough on his palms? His knees? Ilya unbuttoned his jeans and pulled himself free from his boxers, the air so cold where he was so hot, beating, aching all the same, firm and tight. When Shane was right below him, at his feet, his head lifted again. His pretty lips parted, lips that homed such a charming smile, and then Ilya’s cock, too, as he fed it into his warmth.

Shane was not a novice. He knew how to hollow out just right so that he sucked Ilya down. His eyelids fluttered closed, and he rolled his neck, mouth piping hot, moist, taking Ilya with little more struggle than a brief huff through his nose, a telltale widening of his mouth.

Ilya mouthed the word *shit*, raising his hands, extending them out. It was no less than incredible, light popping behind his eyes, and as he watched the slide of Shane’s mouth, he curled his fingers into tight, restraining fists in midair. Shane kissed at the head of him, lips fat and puckered with bubbling saliva— and immediately, surprisingly, he relaxed his head, laying out his tongue, taking Ilya at the crest of it, dark, agitated, ruby red against petal pink. His eyelashes danced, and then they bloomed open like a flower.

They locked eyes, and he blinked once so slowly.

Ilya was going to explode. He carefully placed his hands on either side of Shane’s head, the muscles in his arms taught, rigid. “Okay?” he asked, careful and slurred, and Shane blinked again, grunted a jagged *uh-huh*. Permission: open, bright, blinding. Ilya adjusted his fingers, memorizing where his touch rested, and guided him down. And then back up. Again, again. And then down, down, down. He couldn’t stop. Pretty, pretty, pretty.

Within moments, Shane’s face was bright red, and Ilya was taking deep, short, heavy breaths of air, trying to pace himself, trying to make it last. Shane’s eyelashes grew dark and damp, his head an easy weight to be manipulated. His throat swallowed and made sore, clicking noises, put to rough use. A flood brewed at his waterline.

“Sweet omega, *sladkiy*,” Ilya gasped. “Still okay?”

Shane drew back and took a great, wet breath. He nodded, and then he eagerly sank back down onto Ilya’s cock, rocking his head in even, dizzying pulls, sweaty hair all stuck between Ilya’s fingers. In intervals, the alpha asked him again: *good? All right?* He was bursting at the seams, and he asked, desperate, pleading, “More?” Shane nodded his head, and Ilya bobbed out of him until the alpha brought him down hard and fast, keeping him there, holding until Shane’s hands flew up to grab his hips, nails cutting through his bunched-up briefs. An elated moan squeezed free as if Ilya wasn’t stuffing his mouth to the brim.

He was going to—

It didn’t seem as if Shane ever wanted to stop. He was trembling, red all down his neck, and when Ilya forced him away with a rough pull of his hair, he followed with a gurgling heave, taking in as much air as he could. Spit was coated down his chin and his mouth was damn near fluorescent. Two tears had torn down the corners of his eyes. He scrambled, slow and choppy with his limbs, like he was slipping away from himself, holding on with slippery fingers. Already, of course. Ilya could have guessed it.

The alpha kissed him wet and messy, slipping pleasantries between the lock of their lips, *you are so pretty for me* and *gorgeous omega* and *no one has been down your throat like me* coated in the taste of citrus and of himself. He was higher than what a cigarette could give him, or any drug. Undressing Shane was like endless, consecutive hits: his shirt, over his head, palms sliding over his chest and ribs. His jeans, Shane’s body squirming out. His briefs, pushed down to his ankles, stepped out and over as Ilya backed him up against and into the bed.

He crawled on top of him like he was prowling. It was so fluid, a manifestation of everything that had plagued Ilya’s mind over the last four months. It felt like each still of every dream was being patched effortlessly together.

“Going to treat you so good,” Ilya promised with his lips to Shane’s throat, kissing, pressing there until he felt Shane slacken against the sheets, positively melting, his hands fluttering little things against Ilya’s skin. “Going to make you feel like yourself. Going to make you *know*.” It was an innate need within him, a trait that had surfaced once he had come of age. He had to provide. With one hand holding Shane’s face with a thumb up under his chin, weight propped up on his elbow, Ilya’s free hand gravitated toward where the scent of him was coming out of him in droves, slippery wet. Two fingertips easily gave way, hungry enough for Ilya’s breath to stagger, the room spinning.

It was quick work. After all, Shane was impatient, and he writhed on the bed, heels in the mattress, as if he had not been touched quite like this in months, years, or maybe ever. Ilya drove into him, twisting his wrist until Shane scrambled away from the sensation, winded cries leaving him. A third finger slid alongside the two, and with a skilled bend, Ilya scrubbed something plush over and over and Shane’s eyes snapped open and he shouted,

“Please.” Loud for him here, loud on the ice when he was calling out to his teammates, quite the commanding captain. Now he was following a different lead, moving along with a shove that urged him to turn around onto his stomach, hiking his hips up, the red of his skin

spreading to unimaginable places. He had moved just like this when Ilya found him during his heart— automatic, unthinking. “I want it.”

“Yeah?” Ilya felt like he needed a minute, but it was a race against time, a race against his internal clock, which screamed to claim and bind this confident man who was such a shy omega right underneath his thick skin and structure. He rose to his knees, squeezing himself at the base, and rustled in his nightstand for a condom. “Got these for you, I knew I was going to have you. Was not going to leave without asking for you.” It was as true as it was false. Ilya kept the condoms around as a general practice, always having hated the awkwardness that came with getting up and fumbling in his suitcase, but he would not have been whole until he filled Shane. Not after what he knew he was missing from witnessing the start of his heat. “Will you take it all?”

“I will, I will,” Shane chanted all high in his throat, “like a *good omega*. Please.” And he kept babbling it until Ilya grabbed his hips and aligned himself with a finger swiping over the dimple in his back and *sank*, with Shane opening up for him as easily as his mouth had, tight and— *sucking*. His face pinched evenly between his eyebrows, and then they were there, together.

They both sighed like they were coming to a stop after skating endless laps, heartbeats at the very front of their chests, pulsing throughout their entire bodies. Citrus and ice and smoke; he doubted anyone in the hallway could think clearly with this happening right here, filling up the whole space. “Yes?” Ilya panted, trying to focus, trying to last.

“Yes.”

Ilya draped himself over Shane’s back, placing a heavy palm right in the center of his spine, bowing him low, watching him comply like he was made to do it for *him*. He quickly adopted a brutally swift pace, hips rolling, snap after snap that quickly dissolved Shane’s words into mere sounds that were smushed into the mattress. They fit together so well, frighteningly perfect; Shane made a home for Ilya, and Ilya robbed it, grabbing his hip in an iron grip. In and in and in.

“Oh, my god,” Shane yelped. His fists were white in the sheets, punching sobs bursting out of his chest, and as Ilya drove into him, his legs aching with exertion, the omega’s hands slowly began to loosen until they were limp on the bed, all of him so limp, easy like putty, like dough. His knee slid. Ilya hoisted him up, pressed him down further, crushed him into the mattress. The springs jumped. Shane’s mouth opened against the white sheets. Nothing came out other than his reedy little moans.

It didn’t feel like enough. Ilya didn’t take him gently, but still it did not feel like enough. Not for Shane, either, seemingly, because his hips squirmed back and he kept trying to support his weight, but Ilya kept crushing him down until he sighed, pleased, glowing omega golden, satisfied like all he wanted was to be put there. Ilya wanted to kiss him, wanted to sink his teeth into his skin, feel that citrus flood over his teeth. This was all too much, but still not enough— Ilya chased it, chased Shane, claimed him with rough lunges of his hips so that the intimate, light slapping of their bodies sounded like something beginning to break, chipping, crumbling apart.

“I’m gonna fucking come,” Shane scrambled, all shocked and shaky, almost a little *scared*, grappling for whatever he could reach, which was a pillow, drawing it up close to him, his entire body winding rigid and hard. That was no good, the panic—Ilya knew he was overwhelmed. Why wouldn’t he be, when he was getting fucked the exact way he was always meant to? All throughout him, down to his shaking knees.

Ilya knew how to get him there without the disaster of falling way too fast. He didn’t quite understand how he knew, but when it came to Shane, all he had to do was listen to his own body to determine what the omega’s would need. It didn’t make sense. The most intense things never made much sense, he found.

He drew away, but quickly turned Shane around, manhandled him by his hips and waist, to kiss the trembling whine that slipped out of his mouth before it rang in his ears. He sat up and hauled Shane into his lap, leaning back against the headboard, an angle that twinged his neck, slight enough for him not to really give a fuck about it. It was a little sloppy, but they still moved with a choreographed ease. Shane angled his hips and settled right down onto Ilya, steady, rocking back and forth in a little circle, so skilled that Ilya surged with a rampant, red-hot dose of jealousy. He wondered how the hell he was this good, and he prayed it was because the omega in him knew the alpha in Ilya.

They could kiss this way, which made everything that much better, sweeter, like breakfast on a bright morning. Shane was a sweet little thing, panting against his mouth, swiveling his hips in earnest, drawing a growl from Ilya as he held him tight, close; possessive, needing, *wanting*. He wanted it more than an Olympic win, a cup win, a multi-million dollar hockey career. Shane’s skin was hot to the touch, slippery with sweat, pink with it, too. Ilya’s lap was coated in slick, lemony fresh.

“You love this,” Ilya told him, pulling him down harshly into his lap, onto him, reveling in the little gasps of air that left the omega, all into his own mouth, addicting. It was enough to make him never want another cigarette again. “Pretty boy, feel so perfect, you were made to take it like this. Like it’s mine. So good of you to give it to me.” He was saying too much, prattling, but he couldn’t stop. He was close, Ilya knew, and not just to an orgasm. He was getting a little boneless, his movements full but sluggish, rushed and desperate. His eyes were full and shining, and something in them was getting smaller. His arms were around Ilya’s shoulders, kind of clinging there, wrists loose, and his forehead fell onto Ilya’s, burning up as he took him in and in and out and *in*. “Do you love me inside of you? Do you feel me everywhere?”

“Everywhere,” Shane agreed like the good boy he was. He nosed against Ilya’s face, pressing a thoughtless kiss to his skin, hips pushing, rising, falling, taking. “I feel like—like—” His words failed him, and his eyes danced with panic again, falling further away, getting even smaller, more distant. Ilya wanted to take him there. He wanted nothing more than to watch how pretty he looked when he dropped away.

“Is okay,” Ilya whispered sweetly, sliding his hands up Shane’s waist to give him something more to latch onto, wanting him to go easy and soft. He gritted his teeth to give himself something to do other than bite Shane right at the juncture of his neck. There was time to

think about that, but not now. “I’m going to give you what you need. I’m going to make you feel at home. Take it. Trust me.”

Shane nodded, puppy-dog-sad eyes, hips working hard, choppy and mindless, like he just wanted to do a good job. He *was*. Ilya just had to kiss him. He grabbed him hard at the waist, tipped him onto his back without leaving the space he’d made in him, laying him into the mattress, laying heavy on top of him, right between his open, welcoming thighs. And then he laid *into him*, again and again, and rabbitted his hips so hard and quick into the tight, soaking space that Shane sobbed only a broken *oh* as he came and fell apart and slipped peacefully, suddenly, entirely away from himself. It was beautiful, *stunning*, unlike anything Ilya had ever seen. The alpha knotted up nice and full, pressed himself inside, and wanted to stay there for fucking ever.

Chapter End Notes

yes, yes, crawling. I got a little carried away. Lmk what you think (-:

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

i hope you enjoyed this. I wrote it in (less than) a week so it's not perfect or anything but it was fun :-)) thanks for reading. happy holidays and happy hollanov. until next time

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

Seconds, moments, long minutes passed. Shane breathed heavily, caught in a deep, thick haze. His heartbeat had become all of him: his toes throbbed, his head, his fingertips. Eventually his respiration settled into even, slow sighs, but he remained in the vacant space, lodged in firmly, and then there was sweet, silent nothing.

It was like this for a long time.

His hearing came back first, easy as a breeze, a little too quiet than normal. He heard the faint rustle of bed sheets, a rumbling tenor. Then, mutedly, his smell returned— sweat and burnt sugar, and when his tongue stroked the roof of his mouth, he could taste it, too. So, then, his taste: too dry in his mouth, tinged with salt. After a moment, his touch was next. There was weight on him, perfectly grounding, solid weight, and though he could not move, it felt amazing to not have to. It felt even better, strangely, to not have a choice. But he was hot, sauna-hot, drowsy-hot. There was a light pressure in his back, repeatedly, so soft, pecking.

Finally, slowly, his sight returned. He blinked a few times, and blurriness blotted away to a dimly-lit room. He closed his eyes, filled his lungs as large as he could, and noticed that his body had never felt so untethered. He also noticed that his mind was simply not there.

It was frightening. He had been operating with the switch *on* for his entire life. He could not remember the last dream he had that did not involve hockey, so consuming that he moved in his sleep: lifted weights, ran drills, legs jerking on their own accord. He memorized plays and memorized which of his teammates had memorized him. He planned workouts and speeches and responses when microphones were shoved under his nose. He planned how to stand for photos and when to wake up, when to take his suppressants, when to retreat for a few days to tend to a grisly heat. He knew exactly how to be in front of the world, in front of his parents, in front of his team, but when he moved to flex his fingers now, they didn't budge. Nothing was connected— there was nothing to think or do. There wasn't anything he had to be.

He had never felt like this before in his entire life.

When he opened his eyes, everything came together in a gentle union, soft and mild. Ilya was crowded against his back, a heavy arm draped around him. The pressure on his back was, in fact, from kisses. They were faint and tickling, pulling Shane so, so slowly, from the very

center of his chest, up through the water. Nice and calm, Shane remained there, just below the surface, ripples over his skin.

He shifted his legs. His entire body was sore, but it did not feel typical. He overworked himself all the time, sometimes enough to fall physically ill, muscles torn up, joints overused, compromising his other systems. *This* was strange, because it was as though he had been pulled from himself. Out of body. Only a spirit, a notion. He was tired, but there was nothing that *hurt*. There was nothing *to* hurt.

“Ilya,” he said before he remembered the name. He leaned his weight back on his shoulder, trying to turn, and the lips peppered up his arm, around his shoulderblade, over to his cheek. Marshmallow-burning-rose. He could barely fucking move, and that was okay with him.

Ilya helped him settle onto his back. “Shane.” It sounded like *hello*, which made him smile, wishing he could hide his face so that the alpha wouldn’t see the sharp, doped up tug of his lips. “There you are. Omega. How do you feel?”

Omega. Shane repeated the word to himself. It floated there, beside him, and then it sank away. It didn’t feel like anything, not big and looming and dangerous. It was incredible and freeing. He didn’t want to leave it. He had never been so comfortably out of control before, existing in a space that had always known him, but he had never found before now, before... Ilya. “I don’t feel like anything,” he sighed, but that wasn’t quite the right answer. He just *was*.

“A good nothing?” Ilya kissed him right beside his mouth, a doting little peck. His hand smoothed up his thigh, over his hip, his waist, over his chest. Successfully, he pulled Shane up and in the clear, until he was tingling all over. He was still so warm. Ilya was burning hot. The bed was mussed with the reminder of what they had done. “Happy nothing?”

Yes, Shane felt happy. He really did, in almost an annoying way. It felt like too much to say it out loud. He was scared of it. He tried to think of how he got there, but everything immediately scrambled, half-formed, too difficult. There was touching, and kissing, and spreading. Spreading his lips, his knees, his entire body, just to be taken apart and molded like this. He’d asked for it. Begged. *Needed* it.

Shane turned his head. Ilya met him halfway— shit, three-quarters of the way, like he *knew* him, and their lips connected in a spongy kiss. When they pulled away, he nodded.

Ilya smiled at him. He was all gold, and he smelled a little like woodsy smoke. Shane could see all his teeth, he was smiling so widely, and Shane’s heart staggered like it was tripping down a flight of stairs, leaping and flailing. He was not embarrassed under such a content, almost *admiring* gaze. He felt— kept.

“Do you finally love yourself now?” Ilya asked, his grin falling into a stoic look of seriousness. But it was too sudden; he was dicking around, still rubbing up Shane’s side, tender and encouraging.

“Fuck off,” Shane breathed, a nervous laugh tumbling up through his half-asleep body, a sensation that continued to bring him up to reality. He never hated himself, he guessed—

anyways, hate was a strong word. He could, however, say that he felt reset. No. He felt something he had never been before. What did that mean? What did it mean that he wanted to stay there?

Shamelessly, he used the little bit of energy supplied to him and turned further, rolling himself into Ilya's chest. Ilya made a happy, grumbling sound, spiking the air all hot and sweet, and Shane dozed off, bathed in it. This didn't feel real. He knew that it was only because it was brand new, and there was nothing to deny it against.

When he woke next, baby blue dawn seeped through the closed blinds, and Ilya was asleep next to him, his back beautifully bare. Shane didn't disturb him. He took a long, long shower, taking advantage of the hot water that hotels had no shortage of. He washed his hair, tilted his head back, allowing the water to pelt his face. The steam crowded his lungs, refreshing, and when he opened his mouth to take some of the water in, it burned his tongue, but cooled by the time it slid down his throat when he swallowed. It felt amazing. It was the best shower he'd ever had.

The steam was nearly solid by the time Shane exited, rubbing a towel through his hair and over his body. He took his time even though he couldn't see and everything was slippery, and he smudged his hand through the condensation on the mirror before stepping back to take a good look at himself.

Maybe it was left over droplets of water distorting his vision, but he felt like he looked a little different. He carded his hands over his skin, starting with his chest, then his arms. His waist, haunted by the ghost of Ilya's hands: palms on his ribs, fingertips squeezing at his hips. He *felt* different. He felt lighter; he stood a little more sure of himself. There was no need to rush. There wasn't anything hovering in the back of his mind, gnawing at him. He touched his back, stretching. It was loose. He remembered the feel of the sheets on them, sweaty and sticking to his skin when it arched for the alpha. He'd had sex a handful of times before, a couple times with a man, even, but never with an alpha, someone who had just—connected to him, poured all of himself into him. He was a little awestruck.

He left the bathroom and was welcomed by a rush of cold air, saturated with Ilya's scent, with *theirs*. It was botanical, sweet notes married with fresh greenery. And also—a wheeled-in tray of hot breakfast. Several plates adorned toast and fruit salad and waffles with syrup and sausage.

Ilya had already dug in, sitting on the edge of the bed, shoveling eggs and sausage inside of a folded waffle, hastily creating a makeshift taco before he bit into it. He was as naked as the day he was born. The television played a romantic comedy on cable, a pair of black heels stumbling across linoleum in a low volume.

Ilya turned every ounce of his attention onto Shane, eyes raking up and down his body, a little bit of egg in the corner of his mouth. Shane did not falter though he was in only a towel. "I thought you became the first person to ever drown in a shower," he said flatly, swallowing thickly. His gaze was analytical. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I am." And he was, so he smiled. He toed at Ilya's suitcase, his heart thrumming evenly in his chest, full and hot. "Can I wear something?"

Ilya blinked. “Of course you can.”

It felt large. It all felt like so much. Shane briefly looked through Ilya’s belongings, such normal things: dark clothes and a bottle of cologne. A plastic bag with a toothbrush and toothpaste and floss. He quickly snagged a pair of boxers and a black tee, and dressed with Ilya watching him, watching him, so quiet, the same blue-green eyes Shane had latched onto while Ilya had taken him somewhere new.

“So, is this what you do?” Shane tossed his towel back into the bathroom and stretched his arms, trying not to feel happy and satisfied in the alpha’s clothes. He had been too afraid to touch his blazer for four months, but now, when he finished stretching, he felt the fabric of the shirt between his fingertips, and smelled him with indulgent, subtle huffs of air. He tried to be casual, and surprisingly, for the most part, he was. “With omegas?”

Ilya took another bite of his sandwich. “Have sex with them? Yes.”

Shane hated when Ilya acted like he was a fucking idiot. “No, make them...” he waved his hand around, taking a deep breath. “Have them...” *Drop*, leave themselves. Did Ilya take them apart and guide them back together? Kiss their shoulders and order food for two the next morning? That was what he was asking. He didn’t even want to know the answer, but his body would not let him avoid the question.

“Oh.” Ilya turned back to the television, as though Shane had bored him, which made him sigh. Ilya seemed skilled at avoidance. “No. Now come eat.”

Shane complied, because he found that he was really fucking starving. He sat next to Ilya on the end of the bed, and it wasn’t awkward, but it was still strange — something in the air was uneasy, materializing for certain right when Shane sat down. It made him hyper aware of his surroundings, of each sound and sensation. He accepted the plate of food Ilya pushed his way and said nothing. He was skeptical, and to keep from frowning, he chewed at a piece of toast, counting the variations of fruit in the medley.

“Why do you ask?” Ilya broke the thickening plane of silence. “Are you jealous?”

“I’m not jealous.” Shane could not even fake any interest in the movie playing on screen. He looked at the time: 8:13. He was having lunch with his parents at noon before they left for home, and afterwards he was going to the beach with a few teammates, riding out the rest of the weekend with them. He wanted to ask what Ilya was doing. “It would just be a nice trick, is all.”

“Oh, yeah?” Ilya smiled, shoved the rest of his food into his mouth, and turned to face him properly, snagging the bed sheets and draping them over his naked lap. He chewed, his head bobbing to the side like there was a tune inside it. “A nice trick?” he repeated after swallowing. He chased it with a glass of orange juice, nearly draining the drink. He was ravenous. It made Shane want him, need him. “No tricks.”

Shane narrowed his eyes at him. This was too much; he required picking it apart. He did so with an observant, calm approach. Ilya’s skin looked flushed. He reached out and touched his cheek with the back of his hand, and then his forehead, and then, pushing it, he placed his

palm flat on the side of Ilya's neck. The alpha cocked his head to allow him, his demeanor growing a little more intense. "You're burning up," Shane noticed. That explained the oddness in the air. Yes. Rattled alpha. He smelled it all the time before primetime games.

"Yes, well." Ilya cleared his throat and scratched his stubbly jaw. He was actually nervous. Shane was shocked. The alpha had said in an interview once, fitfully: *I do not get nervous. I get annoyed that I have not won already. I get annoyed that I have a microphone in my face.* "I think you may have done a number on me, omega. And you're wearing my clothes. And you smell good. Smell well?"

"No." Shane smiled all shy and soft, *feeling* all shy and soft, looking down at his plate. "'Good' is correct."

"You smell good. Happy. Content. It makes me..." Ilya sucked air through his teeth, considered the words with a little dance of his fingers in the air. "Wound up. Maybe a rut in a couple of days."

Shane blushed. He knew of that effect, but didn't know he could possibly be the cause of it. It felt personal, connected, in a way that he had never experienced with anyone before. He did not feel like he should move away, or change back into his club-sweaty clothes, anxieties that would have plagued him yesterday. Here he confidently remained, enjoying himself, enjoying this brewing alpha beside him. "I'm sorry."

Ilya shrugged and picked up a fork to poke properly around his plate. "Do not be. I'm fine. I'm happy. How about you? How do you feel? Describe it to me how it was."

It was sweet of Ilya to keep asking him that, over and over. "I'm good. I like the way it felt. *Still* feels." He tried his best to articulate his feelings. "A little lightheaded but not dizzy. Full. Empty. I don't know." He shook his head. "I see how it can...I think it's a special place to be." He poked around his food, bubbly all in his stomach, something stronger and more permanent than a crush. Lasting. "And...you took good care of me. Which makes me feel—warm."

"Yes, I did." Ilya grinned, alpha-proud, which was usually annoying. Now, Shane just felt very pleased with the both of them. "If you want it again, I can put you there. Whenever you want. Whenever you ask."

Shane blushed. So, okay, there was a notion of *again*. For some reason, this just made Shane more nervous. He didn't think he wanted to join the alpha's notorious long list of lovers. Even considering it waned his appetite. "I don't know," he hummed. "Then I think I would get jealous. I wouldn't want to share."

Ilya's eyebrows rose to the ceiling. He was almost, almost smiling, his nonchalance showing a crack. "Then it will just be you. No one to be jealous of. *Voilà*."

What? How was it that easy for Ilya to say? Hearing it, Shane turned gooey in the center. Anxious. He worried he was understanding it wrong, or that Ilya was just joking around with his usual flippancy, and he closed his eyes for a moment and retraced his entire night. Draft ceremony, roses in the air. He went back further, to when he landed in Los Angeles yesterday

morning. A strange smell there, too, in the customs line. He thought back to months ago, trembling in front of his hotel room, in the country of Russia, feeling like he had been there before, *knowing* something about it, unable to shake it off, touching himself to it.

“I don’t understand how you can smell me,” Shane blurted, a perplexity that had followed him the entire time. He took his suppressants daily—though, notably, not this morning. It didn’t make any sense. “Nobody else can. Not like you.”

“Easy.” Ilya poked his fork through the fruit, picky about his selection, and produced a peeled orange wedge. He popped it into his mouth. “You smell so fantastic.” He picked another one, and another one, ignoring the strawberries and slimy cantaloupe and grapes. “And you know I’m special. One of a kind. Not like the others.” Shane rolled his eyes and shoved Ilya, but he thought there must be something to his words, or else he wouldn’t be here. Grinning, Ilya lifted his hand and grabbed Shane by the back of his neck, squeezing lightly, knowingly. It made spots dance behind the omega’s eyes.

“I will be happy if it’s just you I smell,” Ilya told him seriously, his smile falling away once he settled into thought. “It feels like…” his hand squeezed him one more time before his hand slid, palm cupping his jaw, his thumb nudging Shane’s chin up. “What is the word for when someone makes you do something you cannot control?”

“Torture?” Shane squawked.

“No,” Ilya laughed. “Because I like it. I mean when someone makes you move on your own. Like the movie *Pinocchio*.”

“Captivity,” Shane tried again, feeling a little dumb in the skull, thinking of the little wooden boy in the man’s workshop.

“No, no!” Ilya shook his head fiercely, threw back the sheets, and tossed himself on top of Shane. Shane went happily to the mattress, laughter all in his chest. He ran his hands down Ilya’s bare back, trying to remember it, trying to gather up the guts to ask if he could see him more often—way more often. Again and again, until they were more two, than one. The air grew sickly sweet. “Like magic, omega, the word like magic.”

“A spell,” Shane breathed, understanding washing over him like the heat of summer. He tilted his head, and Ilya put his face right in the crook of his neck, huffing in deep. There was a gentle graze of teeth right beneath his ear, canines sharp, the steam of Ilya’s breath making his pulse race. He wanted to be his, but he knew that he first had to spend more time as himself. “A spell,” he repeated softly.

“You get that, too?” Ilya’s deep voice rumbled and rolled through Shane’s skin, into his throat, it felt like. It was getting hard for him to function, caught in the same mindless throes he had been in when he was in the alley. And when he was on his knees.

“Yes,” Shane answered. “So, um, what—?” He was so scared to ask. “Do you want, then, like.”

Ilya kissed his neck. “Spit it out, Hollander.”

“When an alpha and— and we, you know, see each other. That’s a courtship.” Dates and gifts and *intention*, working together toward a future. It was too big. Too big to see, but enough to *feel*. “Is that what you want?”

“If that’s what you want to call it when I fuck you crazy and share breakfast with you after.” Ilya sat up on his elbows, bracketing Shane in. “Next time, I will get a room with a kitchen, and I will cook for you. I will earn you.”

“But how?” Shane frowned until Ilya kissed him on the mouth, syrupy, marshmallow, orange. It made him glow from the inside out, and his worries danced at the top like melted ice, small and weak. “I don’t want anyone to know I’m an omega. Not yet. I don’t want that yet.”

“Take your time. I will fly to you, you will fly to me. We can figure out the rest. Lots of hotels.” He breathed in deep. “When you are ready for me, I will bite you right here.” His hand was a light anchor around Shane’s neck, and his thumb pressed down firmly over the spot where omegas were claimed. Just the touch alone was transformative, too sensitive, usually avoided. Shane swallowed thickly, and the room was draped in another blanket of heat. It was trapped between their bodies, begging to be expelled. “And you will be mine. Is that what you want, if I treat you well?”

Shane grinned like a fool, lifting himself up onto his elbows to kiss him. He felt fantastic. At home. He felt *right*. It was real. It was real when they kissed and real when Ilya took off his clothes, real when Shane touched him. “Yes.” He thought about telling Ilya that his grammar had been perfect, but knew he would have plenty of time to.

He closed his eyes, head tilted back, hands in Ilya's curly hair, and tasted the word, “*Alpha*.” Just to make sure it was real.

He smiled.

Chapter End Notes

as always, lmk what you think <3 and thanks again. Not to be dramatic but hearing how you feel really touches my heart. All I do is write write write so I’m really happy to share it.

End Notes

thanks for reading :-) until next time hehe <3

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