

Please Don't Go

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Please Don't Go

by [WillowDeville](#)

Summary

“I don’t want to look at you right now.” Ilya’s voice is raw but firm. “I don’t want to talk to you. Go home.” Leaving the towel bunched up on the counter, he tries to leave.

No fucking way. Shane steps into his path and stops him. There is no way he’s letting Ilya walk away like that. And why the fuck is Ilya the one who is upset? He’s the one who brought up that stupid party in the first place. And he’s the one who can’t answer one fucking question.

“Would you choose me?”

Shane discovers how tired Ilya is of hiding and how much it hurts him that no one knows. Shane also discovers that he’s the asshole in this scenario and decides to change that, fuck the consequences. He can panic about it another day.

Notes

Set just after chapter 22 of TLG. Canon-divergent except for the starting point, so you should be able to read this as a stand-alone fic, hopefully without too many spoilers. Just my take on what might happen if Shane did decide to be brave and go to Boodram’s party with Ilya. This fic is complete, I’m just finishing the editing for chapters 2 and 3, so they will be posted over the next couple of days. Happy reading! Hope you enjoy. 💕💕

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

Chapter 1

SHANE

“Would *you* choose *me*?” Shane glares at Ilya, daring him to answer. His heart is pounding in his chest, the grind of his teeth echoing in his head as he clenches his jaw.

Ilya just stares back at him, with a mix of defiance and anger, and Shane already knows that he’s not going to get a straight answer. Or any answer at all, for that matter. Because, that’s all Ilya has been doing for the past few months. It’s either a straight dismissal or taking the sass right to the edge of outright hurtfulness, nothing in between.

“You should go,” Ilya says quietly and cutting.

“What? No way, fuck that. Answer the question.”

“No.” Ilya snatches the kitchen towel from the handle of the oven door and unnecessarily wipes over the clean worktop of the kitchen island. “Go home, Shane. We can talk later.” He stops his wiping and looks up.

Shane flinches. Ilya’s eyes are glistening with unshed tears.

“I don’t want to look at you right now.” Ilya’s voice is raw but firm. “I don’t want to talk to you. Go home.” Leaving the towel bunched up on the counter, he tries to leave.

No fucking way. Shane steps into his path and stops him. There is no way he’s letting Ilya walk away like that. And why the fuck is Ilya the one who is upset? He’s the one who brought up that stupid party in the first place. And he’s the one who can’t answer one fucking question.

“Would you choose me?”

The words have barely left Shane’s mouth before Ilya is in his face and shoves him hard, pinning him against the wall. Ilya’s nostrils flare, and Shane can feel Ilya’s breath against his lips, the air between them charged with something dangerous.

But then Ilya lets go of him and takes a deliberate step back. As quickly as the anger boiled over only seconds ago it evaporates, leaving nothing but a tired frown on Ilya’s face. He looks exhausted, and when he takes another step back, away from Shane, his eyes finally spill over. “I already chose you, Hollander.”

Shane sucks in a sharp breath. What? How? He has no idea what Ilya is talking about, but he can tell Ilya is more than a little hurt and clearly done with him.

“Go home, please,” Ilya whispers. Without giving Shane a chance to reply, he turns and leaves the kitchen. A moment later, the downstairs bathroom door closes and the lock clicks shut, and Shane is left staring at the empty space in front of him.

What the hell is happening? Shane knows with every ounce of his heart that Ilya would never hurt him. So why do Ilya's words sting like Shane's been punched in the face?

Because Ilya is right.

The thought hits Shane like a freight train, and between the undeniability of that truth and his own fury at Ilya for even suggesting they'd go to that stupid party together, Shane thinks he might black out. His vision goes blurry, and he needs air. In his lungs. Like yesterday.

He's vaguely aware that he's moving, but his ears are ringing and the rest of the world sounds like it is wrapped in cotton. There is an awful noise coming from his chest, but Shane ignores it in favour of struggling into his sneakers before grabbing his coat from the coat closet.

The sudden change of temperature as he steps outside does nothing to clear his head, but somehow, he ends up behind the steering wheel of his car, even though he has no recollection of where he got his keys from. Someone is wheezing nearby, his coat feels like a straitjacket, and there is something white flickering at the edge of his vision. He starts the engine, but that's as far as he gets.

Ilya has never told him to leave before. Ever.

A wave of nausea crashes over him with such violence, it rips a sob from his throat. Folds him in half as he crumbles against the steering wheel. His eyes are stinging, and another sob breaks the dam. He cries, ugly and snotty and loud. Ilya is done with him, and Shane is hiccupping for air as the pain wraps around his lungs. Ilya has kicked him out, doesn't want to see him, doesn't want anything to do with him, and everything just hurts so fucking much.

How is he supposed to leave not knowing if he'll ever come back? He hadn't planned to go back to Montreal for another day, so how is he supposed to drive all the way back there knowing this morning might have been the last time he ever woke up next to Ilya? The last time they ever showered together, or the last time Ilya made him his favourite smoothie for breakfast?

The last time they ever kissed?

What if they're done? For good? What is he going to tell his parents? What is he going to tell Hayden, and Jackie, and the kids? They're supposed to go to the Pikes on New Year's Eve for dinner.

Another bout of violent sobs rattles through him. Eventually, he topples sideways against the door, his head coming to rest against the window. The cool glass against his temple shocks some air into the furnace his body is currently trapped in, and for the first time, Shane thinks he can breathe again.

They're *not* done. He sits up and leans back in his seat. The cuffs of his jumper are soaked from his tears. He blinks until his vision becomes clearer and takes another deep breath, then another. He's still in his car, on Ilya's drive, outside Ilya's house. They can't be done.

As his body slowly calms down and the panic fog on his brain lifts, he is hit with another emotion, one he hasn't had to deal with for years.

"I have no one." He knows Ilya's words aren't true but also very true all the same. Shane's parents are *Shane's* parents, Hayden and Jackie are *Shane's* friends, and so is Rose, technically speaking. That most of them found out about them through unfortunate circumstances is a moot point. And so is the fact that they're accepting of Ilya and their relationship. Ultimately, they are primarily Shane's emotional support network, and if he needs someone to talk to about Ilya or their relationship, they are there.

Ilya doesn't have that. He might have had when he was still in Boston, and in a disturbingly fucked-up way, even in Moscow. Maybe not someone to talk to about Shane, but someone that was *Ilya's* to start with, *his* family, *his* friend.

A sudden vivid memory makes Shane's breath shudder. Of standing alone in a swanky elevator in an even swankier hotel in LA in 2014, typing and deleting a text to the only person he had and didn't have at all.

He does have Ilya. *"We can talk later."* They're not done, but somehow Shane has fucked up. Royally. Too stuck in his own head, too happy that he can finally be with Ilya *and* still play hockey on one of the best teams in the league and win cups. That he can have a family and friends he doesn't have to hide from.

Ilya has none of that. And since leaving Boston, he doesn't even have a good team anymore. Still, he has never complained about it, not once, even when they've been losing almost every flipping game. Shane has no idea how Ilya copes with it.

Shane glances towards the house. He drags his hand over his face and wipes away some of the tears, only for his eyes to well up again.

Ilya isn't coping. Hasn't been for a while, and Shane has been too stupid to take notice. Even though the signs have been there all along. The non-answers when there used to be banter, the chirping that has started to cross the line more often than not. The hurt in Ilya's eyes when Shane initially shied away from his touch at Fabian's concert, even though they were in the darkest corner of that venue where no one was ever going to take notice of them.

And despite everything, Ilya still plays his best hockey, even if his team can't quite keep up with him. Puts in the extra effort to do things for Shane, like cooking him special dietary dinners or hunting down a retired photographer just to get a particular print from the photoshoot that started it all.

And for once, Ilya asks for something for himself, and Shane shoots him down without even considering. Something as simple as going to a party and taking Shane with him. He didn't even suggest telling them about their relationship. He offered a completely reasonable excuse for why Shane might be with him. Shane's family is in Ottawa. It's Christmas. People know they are friends.

Shane is such a jerk. Ilya is somewhere behind those dark windows all by himself, hurting, and Shane has caused that. He needs to make it right. Even if Ilya was adamant that he

doesn't want to see or talk to him, Shane will not leave him alone again. He can't leave him alone like this.

He has to make it right.

He shuts the engine off and grabs his coat, which for some reason he hasn't actually put on, and jumps back out of his car. Taking the stairs to the front porch two, three steps at a time, he's at the front door again, letting himself back into the house.

The foyer is eerily quiet. The TV in the living room is still on, muted, like they left it earlier, and so is the kitchen light. Shane can see the kitchen towel still lying on the counter of the island, but the door to the downstairs bathroom stands ajar and the room behind the door lies in darkness.

"Ilya?" he calls out quietly, too worried he might scare Ilya off simply by being too loud in this silent space. He starts towards the bathroom door when a noise from somewhere he can't place halts him in his step. He holds his breath and listens.

He hears it again. A wheezy gasp, then a whimper, and it's coming from the living room. He's moving again in a heartbeat, and there is Ilya, crumpled into a heap in the corner of the sofa, his body shaking.

"Ilya." Shane's heart breaks as he drops to his knees next to Ilya. He has seen Ilya cry fewer than a handful of times, and never like this. Never this out of control, never with so much pain. His own tears are streaming down his face, blurring his vision, as his hand hovers over Ilya's shoulder. He's not sure Ilya is even aware he's there, and for a second, he remembers Ilya's quiet but clear words from earlier.

"I don't want to look at you."

What if Ilya still doesn't want to see him?

But then Ilya sniffs and opens his eyes, those beautiful hazel-grey eyes, achingly glistening inside painfully red rims, and Shane swallows.

"You came back." Ilya's voice cracks, and then he reaches for Shane and pulls him in, and all Shane can do is wrap his arms around him.

"I did."

"I am so fucking lonely." The words are merely a whisper, but they punch the air out of Shane's lungs and the feet from under any last bit of composure Ilya may have had. He grapples for Shane and clings to him and cries, and cries.

"I know." Shane grips him tighter and presses his lips to Ilya's hair. They're a mess, and all this hurt is his fault. He did this. "I know, and I'm so fucking sorry. God, Ilya, I am so sorry." He swallows salty tears and his own hopelessness. How did he let this happen?

It takes Ilya a long time to calm down while Shane rocks him gently, whispering "I'm sorry" and "I love you" into his ear over and over. He knows no words will fix whatever Ilya is

going through right now, but he desperately wants him to know that he is not alone. That Shane will be here to help him through it. Help *them* through it.

Eventually, Ilya's sobs turn into quieter gasps for air. Shane's knees are screaming at him from where he's been kneeling on the floor for so long, so he carefully nudges Ilya and climbs onto the sofa with him until he's wedged into the corner with Ilya's head buried against his neck. Ilya is still wrapped around him, but he doesn't feel as tense as he was.

Shane closes his eyes and just holds him. As much as the potential fallout of their relationship accidentally going public terrifies him, he isn't sure keeping it a secret is worth it if this is what it leads to. Everything hurts. His limbs, his heart and his mind. Ilya. His boyfriend hurts so fucking much, and all because Shane doesn't want to face the consequences of being in a relationship with him.

"I'm sorry," Shane says again, firmly running his hand up and down along Ilya's spine. Ilya sniffs and nudges his nose against Shane's neck, tightens his grip where he's holding on to Shane's hoodie, and Shane knows he has to do something.

"What time does this party at Boodram's start?" he asks quietly before he can change his mind. His heart speeds up at the thought of what he might be suggesting.

Ilya stills, then takes a deep breath and lets it out through his nose. "We don't have to," he mumbles. "Was a stupid idea."

"Do you know who's going to be there?"

Ilya loosens the death grip he still has on Shane's hoodie and shifts so he can look up at him. His eyes are glassy and tired, but there is also a splinter of hope in them, and Shane wants to grab it and make it into kindling and set fire to it.

"Only a few," Ilya says without taking his eyes off Shane. "Bood and Cassie, Evan and his wife Caitlin. Hazy, Troy and Luca. Maybe Harris."

That isn't as many people as Shane expected, and most of them he's actually met at their last Ottawa summer camp.

"Is Lisa working?" he asks. He remembers Wyatt Hayes' wife Lisa, as well as Boodram's wife Cassie. So the only people he doesn't know are Evan's wife Caitlin and Harris, the Centaurs' social media guy, and apparently Troy Barrett's secret crush.

"Shane, we don't have to," Ilya says again.

"Do you trust them?" Shane ignores him on purpose because otherwise he might lose his nerve.

Ilya's eyes are wide, searching. He doesn't say anything for a few long seconds. When he finally speaks, his voice is steady for the first time since Shane came back into the house. "They will not think anything of it if you come with me as a friend."

Shane huffs, then chuckles. Of course, Ilya is still giving him an out. But as much as Shane wants to take him up on that offer, he doesn't think it's what Ilya needs right now.

“And if I don't come with you as your *friend*?”

Ilya smirks, and Shane can almost hear the chirp that Ilya is most definitely holding back. But then Ilya grows serious again. “I do not think they will care. I mean, they will be shocked, and most likely they will be very dramatic, but they will not tell anyone if we ask them not to. So yes. I trust them.”

Shane gently twists one of his fingers around a strand of Ilya's curls, and Ilya hums quietly. His eyes are still red, his brow still furrowed, but the tightness is gone, and Shane wants to kick himself again for putting it there in the first place.

It's not often that Ilya ever asks for something he truly wants, something his heart truly wants. He's the king of reading other people and giving them what they need, usually camouflaged so well behind his charming assholery that they don't even realise what he's doing. He's done it for Shane as long as they've known each other.

But Ilya asking for himself — that's a fucking rarity. And it's about time Shane returns the favour, so he lets go of Ilya's hair and cups his face instead, gently wiping away the dried-up traces of tears with his thumb. “Okay,” he says, sounding a lot more confident than he feels. “I'll come with you.”

The small smile that appears on Ilya's lips is the best thing Shane has seen all day.

“As my boyfriend?” Ilya asks.

“Yes. As your boyfriend.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

It's party time at Boodram's.

Chapter Notes

Wow, thank you for all the kudos, comments, and bookmarks on the first chapter, you guys are awesome! 💖 I'm a little bit giddy. 🥳🥳🥳

TROY

“Troy, my boy,” Boodram greets him with the biggest smile before hauling him over the threshold into his house and into a crushing hug.

“Hmph,” Troy huffs into Boodram’s shoulder. Eloquent. “Thanks for the invite.”

Boodram laughs and lets him go, but not without patting him firmly on his back. “Thanks for coming. Might not be a full house here tonight, but the food is just as good as always.”

“Stop beating your own drum, Bood,” Wyatt Hayes shouts from somewhere. Troy follows Boodram further into the house, where he finds their goalie behind the island of what is a massive open-plan kitchen/living room. A slim, dark-haired woman, who Troy assumes is Boodram’s wife, is standing in the open door of an almost industrial size refrigerator filled to the brim with bowls and tubs of all sorts of different type of barbecue ingredients.

Behind her, fairy lights are hung along the floor-to-ceiling windows, and despite the freezing temperatures, the doors to the patio are wide open. Outside, the fairy lights continue, and the patio itself is sheltered by a walled barbecue area with a covered pergola roof. Outdoor furniture and space heating lamps are dotted all over. A small Christmas tree balances on one end of the wall, golden and blue lights flashing merrily against the dark night sky beyond.

“Troy, meet my wife, Cassie,” Boodram says, and Cassie gives him a playful salute in between the dishes she pulls from the fridge. “And you know that weird guy over there.” He nods towards Wyatt.

“Hey, I’m not the one opening the conversation with a brag about my food,” Wyatt says, and Troy barks out a laugh. He wasn’t quite sure about coming when the invitation came through on the group chat. He is still so new to the team that he wasn’t quite sure he was welcome

just yet. But then Luca Haas messaged him privately, asking if he was going, and the kid was new, too, and sounded so keen to go, Troy couldn't say no.

The fact that Harris replied on the group chat that he might pop by as well may have helped the decision along, too, but no one needs to know that.

"There is definitely plenty of it," Cassie smirks as she nudges the fridge closed with her backside. "Go take a seat outside. The others should be here any minute."

As if on cue, the doorbell rings.

Troy follows Wyatt out onto the patio and takes a seat on one of the large sectionals while Wyatt deposits the bowls he's been carrying near the barbeque. It's an impressive barbecue, not that Troy has any idea how one would operate one, but it looks fancy enough with the cast-iron hood and the chrome piping. And whatever is already cooking on it smells incredible.

"We take the piss, but he is an absolute beast behind that thing," Wyatt says as he opens another smaller fridge hidden under the outdoor kitchen worktop. He pulls out two beers and holds them up. "You drinking?"

"Yeah, absolutely." Troy grins. "I took an Uber."

"Good man." Wyatt chuckles. He opens both bottles, hands one to Troy and flops down on the sofa next to him.

It's surprisingly warm out with the heaters overhead, and Troy shucks his coat just as the noise level inside rises dramatically. A moment later, Evan Dykstra and his wife Caitlin, as well as Luca and Harris all spill out through the patio doors.

"Hey Troy, you made it," Harris hollers, that infectious grin of his growing as wide as his face, and Troy is sure he's glowing like a glow stick in the dark with how much his cheeks are burning.

He can't stop his own smile, though, and gives a shy wave. "Hi Harris." Next to him, Wyatt chuckles, and Troy quickly ducks his head, cursing himself for how obvious he must be. He is relieved to be saved from any further unwanted scrutiny when Luca hands Cassie a bottle of wine.

"Man, I said no presents." Boodram playfully slaps Luca over the back of his head.

Now it is Luca who is blushing furiously, but he's still laughing. "My mother made me bring it," he says. "It's French. It's a very good year. I don't even know why I have it. It would be wasted with us rookies, so I thought I might as well give it to someone who can appreciate it."

"Are you calling us old, Haasy?" Wyatt teases, and Luca's face turns an even darker shade of pink.

“Leave the kid alone,” Cassie chides. She gives Luca’s shoulder a gentle squeeze. “Thank you. I most certainly appreciate it. They’re just heathens.”

Caitlin takes the bottle off her and studies the label. “So do I. Ooh, this *is* good. Don’t mind me, but I’m going to open this. Cassie, where are your bottle openers?”

Cassie laughs and follows her back into the kitchen.

“Already wrapping the ladies around your little finger, Haasy?” Dykstra teases, and Luca groans. He looks like he wouldn’t mind being swallowed by the patio floor.

“Leave him alone, guys,” Harris says, grinning, as he sinks down onto the sofa on the other side of Troy. “It’s only his first party.”

Dykstra grabs another three beers from the fridge and passes them to Harris and Luca before making himself comfortable on one of the loungers. He looks around their little group and takes a swig from his drink. “Is this it, or is anyone else coming? I’m fucking starving!”

“Just Roz.” Boodram smirks. He opens the lid of his barbecue and casually places a few steaks onto the grill. The burning fat sizzles and crackles, the spicy smell making Troy’s mouth water. “He’s bringing his partner.”

“Excuse me?” Harris jolts up straight while Wyatt huffs a “What?”. Every single head, including Troy’s, turns towards Boodram.

“You are joking?” Dykstra has moved to the edge of his seat.

“Fucking finally,” Wyatt says.

“You knew he had a girlfriend?” Dykstra stares at Wyatt.

Troy thinks back to their last game in New York, when Rozanov took him to the Kingfisher. When they walked back to their hotel together and unexpectedly shared their sexual preferences with each other. If only they knew that for Rozanov, partner doesn’t necessarily mean girlfriend.

“Well, why else do you think he’s always busy every time we have time off?”

“You know who she is?” Harris leans forward so he can look past Troy at Wyatt.

Harris’ hand rests on the back of the sofa, delightfully close to the back of Troy’s neck, and Troy tries to hide his smile behind taking another swig from his beer. If only they knew.

Wyatt just shrugs, and that makes Troy look at him. Wyatt meets his gaze, the smirk on his face all too knowing, and Troy wonders if they’re both thinking the same thing. Surely not.

“Do you?” Harris has now turned his attention to Boodram, who is piling more food onto the grill.

“I haven’t got a clue. He just texted me earlier, saying he will drop by with his girlfriend.” Then, apparently realising that Wyatt didn’t actually answer the question, he narrows his eyes and points the tongs at him. “You know who it is.”

“I have an inkling,” is all Wyatt says, now grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“I bet you a thousand it’s that Russian girl from Boston,” Dykstra says just as Cassie and Caitlin return from the kitchen, both with big wine glasses in their hands.

“Who are we betting on?” Caitlin squeezes onto the lounge next to her husband, who shuffles back to make room for her.

“Rozanov’s girlfriend,” Boodram supplies. “He’s bringing her with him.”

“Oh.” Caitlin looks at Cassie. “You didn’t tell me that little tidbit of news?”

Cassie laughs and flops into the big armchair next to them. “Sorry, I haven’t got that far yet. I have no idea who he’s bringing, but I’m just glad we’ll have a bit of extra girl power with this lot.”

“What if it’s a guy?” Harris throws in, and Troy just about manages not to choke on his beer. Wyatt snorts, and Troy is convinced Wyatt is purposely looking the other way when Troy glances at him. Wyatt knows something.

“Hah, you wish,” Luca chimes in from the other end of the sofa, which earns him a round of laughter, and the shy smile on the rookie’s face turns into a beaming grin. “I bet five hundred it’s someone high profile. Like the US president’s granddaughter or something.”

“Oh, we are taking bets now?” Boodram says. “I think it’s someone who’s married. Why else would he make such a big secret of it? I’m in with a thousand.”

“Nah.” Dykstra waves him off. “He might be a womaniser, but he’s never been one for drama. It’s that girl from Boston, I’m telling you. She’s Sergei Vetrov’s daughter, isn’t she?”

“I bet two thousand it’s Jane,” Wyatt throws in.

Troy snorts. “Who the fuck is Jane?” Maybe Wyatt doesn’t know shit after all.

“You fucking know something.” Again, the tongs are pointed at Wyatt as Boodram glares at him.

“Yes, who the fuck is Jane?” Harris is now almost leaning over Troy, and Troy has to stop himself from laughing at the whole scenario. Harris will lose his shit when he finds out how close to the truth he is with his guess. *If* Troy is right, that is.

“Just someone Roz used to text,” Wyatt muses. “A lot.”

“And how do you know who he’s texting?”

“Man, I’m a goalie, I see things. Even if they make my eyes bleed sometimes. I have also been living next to him in the locker room for the last three years.”

“Anyway,” Cassie interrupts them. “We have Sergei Vetrov’s daughter, a married woman, Joe Biden’s granddaughter, and Jane. Troy, what about you?”

Troy grows tense, caught a little off guard by the sudden attention. He manages to pull himself together before anyone seems to notice and waves her off. “I’ll pass. I know way too little about Rozanov’s love life to speculate.”

“Hah, cheapskate,” Dykstra says.

“Fair enough.” Cassie chuckles. “What about you, Harris?”

“Oh no, I’m not getting involved.” Harris holds up both his hands. “This is way above my pay grade.”

There is laughter all around, loud enough that they almost miss the doorbell ringing. It rings again, and it’s almost comical how quickly it goes quiet as eight heads simultaneously turn towards the house.

Boodram is the first to move. He drops his tongs and wipes his hands on his apron. He points a finger at the whole round as he strides inside. “You all behave. We don’t want to scare her off, is that clear?”

There is more laughter. Troy holds his breath. His heart is definitely trying to climb up his throat. Harris bumps his shoulder, completely unaware of how big a thing this might become in just a few seconds’ time.

Boodram disappears into the foyer and out of sight, and they all listen as the front door opens.

“Shane Hollander, bro. What the fuck are you doing here? We were all taking bets on Roz’ secret—” Boodram cuts off and they hear Rozanov snort with laughter. It’s followed by an awkward chuckle and a “Hi Zane” from Hollander.

“What the fuck?” Dykstra is on his feet, his hands at his head, staring into the house. Luca looks equally gobsmacked, his mouth hanging open.

Troy can’t help but chuckle.

Harris instantly narrows his eyes at him.

“You knew, didn’t you?” Wyatt taps Troy’s arm with the back of his hand. He’s grinning like mad.

“I guessed,” Troy says quietly. “Wasn’t sure, though. For a while there, I thought you knew too.”

Wyatt cackles. “Who do you think *Jane* is?” He waggles his eyebrows. “Jane—Shane. He’s not the most creative with names.”

“No fucking way.” Harris is looking at them as if they’ve sprouted extra heads.

The conversation is interrupted when Shane Hollander steps through the patio doors, closely followed by Rozanov and a very confused-looking Zane Boodram. Absolutely no one misses the hand Rozanov gently places on the small of Hollander’s back.

Troy is grinning so much his face is hurting. This is fucking huge.

“Nice surprise, Hollander.” Wyatt is on his feet and pulls Hollander into a tight hug. He pats him on the back before letting him go. “It’s good to see you.”

“You too, Hazy,” Hollander says, his smile a lot more reserved. Everyone knows how neurotic Shane Hollander can be. Troy can only imagine what chaos is raging in his head right now.

“Roz, you sneaky bastard,” Dykstra teases as Hollander shakes Caitlin’s hand. “You kept that one quiet.”

“Be nice,” Rozanov snaps back, but the smile splitting his face betrays the bite in his voice. “It almost took a domestic crisis to convince him to come with me.”

Troy has to laugh at that. He also doesn’t miss the quick glance Rozanov and Hollander share with each other and wonders what made them finally decide to go public. On a very small scale, admittedly, but still.

Then Hollander turns towards him, and Troy is suddenly hyper-aware again that he’s sitting next to Harris. That Harris’ thigh is almost touching his own, that his arm is still casually thrown over the back of the sofa behind him.

“Troy, good to see you,” Hollander says and shakes his hand. Then his eyes flicker to Harris. “And you must be Harris. I’ve heard a lot about you.”

For the briefest of moments, Hollander looks back at Troy, and their eyes meet, and oh fuck, Hollander knows. He so fucking knows, and Troy wants to combust on the spot.

Thankfully, Harris seems to be none the wiser. “I hope only good things.” He laughs and shakes Hollander’s hand.

“Of course, only good things,” Rozanov says from where he’s spying over Boodram’s shoulder, already eyeing up the goods on the grill. “He’s very good at doing thirst traps for Instagram. Always gets my best side.”

“It’s called good PR,” Harris shoots back at Rozanov. Then, with a glint in his eye, he leans forward and fake whispers to Hollander, “He loves it, really.”

Hollander laughs, and Troy thinks he looks a little less tense than he did a few minutes ago.

“Oh, I know,” Hollander says. He shakes Luca’s hand and then sits down next to him. Mumbles an almost shy “thank you” when Wyatt hands him a beer.

Troy chuckles. Harris definitely knows how to make them look good. Troy is no prude, but he certainly doesn’t flaunt his body quite as much as Rozanov does. Still, he can admit, the way Harris always manages to catch them is impressive. And most of the time it isn’t actually the posed shots that ultimately make it online, but the candid ones taken right before or after the pose. Or the random ones taken in the chaos of the locker room when they’re chirping, laughing or arguing. The ones when they’re still themselves before the focus of the lens makes them put on that carefully sculptured mask that comes with living life in the public eye.

“So, who won the bet?” Rozanov grins as he sinks onto the cushion next to Hollander. He steals the bottle from Hollander, takes a long gulp and then winks at him.

Hollander just shakes his head, but the fondness on his face is unmistakable.

“Hold up, Roz,” Boodram says. “Who wants a burger? First ones are ready. And you said you were going to bring your girlfriend. Not fair.”

“Uh-uh.” Rozanov wiggles a finger at him. “*Partner*. I said partner. You need to learn how to read.”

Across the patio, Cassie leans towards her husband and snatches his phone from the back pocket of his jeans. She taps in the code to unlock it and then snorts. “He’s right.”

“I still can’t get my head around this.” Dykstra is still openly staring at Rozanov and Hollander. “How?”

“Well, you know.” Rozanov grins, in his element. “One day, we were doing this commercial, and you know, we had to do a lot of skating, and after a lot of skating, a man has to take shower—”

“Ilya, I swear to God, if you keep going, you’re sleeping on the couch tonight.”

Rozanov’s mouth snaps shut.

Oh wow. The air is filled with cackles and snorts of laughter, but Troy can only stare at Hollander in awe. He doesn’t think he has ever witnessed anyone ever shutting Rozanov up. But here he is, Shane Hollander — quiet, meticulous, polite Shane Hollander — and Rozanov is smitten. Clearly.

“Wait, what photoshoot?” Wyatt asks. “When did you ever do a photoshoot on skates together?”

Rozanov opens his mouth, but Hollander grabs his thigh and stops him, which earns them more laughter.

Cassie is still tapping away on her husband’s phone. Then her fingers still and her eyebrows shoot up. “CCM?”

Troy doesn't even remember them ever doing a photoshoot, never mind anything for CCM. He knows they're both sponsored by them, but—

"Oh, I remember that." Wyatt lights up next to him. He frowns. "That was ages ago."

Rozanov is staring at his feet. He bites his lip to hide a grin. Hollander shakes his head, but he is smiling too.

"2009," Cassie provides helpfully, because apparently the internet is in on their game of murder mystery too.

"What the fuck?"

"Are you fucking kidding me?"

"Twelve fucking years ago?"

"Yes, involved a lot of fucking back then," Rozanov says, straight-faced.

"ILYA!"

"Oh, this is better than any Christmas Hallmark movie I was planning to watch over the holidays," Harris comments, and Troy can't help but elbow him playfully. He feels his cheeks heating up when Harris smiles at him, wide and— happy?

In the corner of the sofa, Rozanov is directing a similar smile at Hollander. He whispers something too quiet for anyone but Hollander to hear, but Troy doesn't miss how Rozanov's fingers brush against Hollander's arm almost unintentionally when he leans closer. Or that Hollander takes Rozanov's hand and intertwines their fingers.

"Twelve fucking years," Wyatt says again, more to himself than to anyone else, before he remembers himself. "Uhm, everyone, just to be clear. This obviously isn't public knowledge, so we all understand that this doesn't leave this room, right?"

"Of course," Troy says to a round of agreement from the rest of them. He still can't quite get his head around twelve years. Suddenly, his two years of sneaking around with Adrian seem pretty insignificant compared to twelve fucking years. How are Rozanov and Hollander not exhausted? And how has no one ever found out?

"Yeah, naturally," Dykstra says. "We're not twats."

"Thank you," Hollander says, and he visibly relaxes a little more.

"I don't know." Rozanov smirks. "I've been called a twat plenty of times."

"That's because you don't have an off button when it comes to running your mouth," Luca says.

Rozanov glares at the young rookie, then back at Hollander, scandalised.

Hollander just laughs. “He said it, not me.”

“Right! Again! Who wants a burger?” Boodram hollers over their heads. “Steaks are about done as well for anyone who wants them bloody. God, it’s like trying to feed a bunch of pre-teens with you lot. Not all at once, hold up, not all at once,” he adds when almost everyone rises to their feet at the same time.

Harris’ hand lands on Troy’s shoulder and he squeezes it lightly. “You want me to grab you some? Saves both of us queueing.”

The touch lingers, and Troy meets his eyes, lets out a quiet breath through his nose. He’s not the one that came out tonight, so why does he feel so giddy. “Yeah, uhm, that would be cool. That would be cool. Thanks.” He knows he is all over the place, but he doesn’t care.

“Grab us another round from the fridge, would you?” Wyatt asks.

Harris grins. “Will do.” He gives Troy’s shoulder another quick squeeze and then he’s gone, and the sudden breeze of air in the empty space left behind makes Troy shiver.

Rozanov and Hollander haven’t moved either. Sitting close to each other, knees touching, they seem to be simply observing the scene in front of them with fondness, and possibly some awe on Hollander’s part.

Troy isn’t surprised by how everyone is reacting. This whole team the Centaurs have is built differently than any other team in the league. More genuine. More open and accepting of everyone, no matter their background, mental state, or sexuality. Less stuck up their own asses.

But Hollander didn’t necessarily know that before he met them. Or didn’t believe a team like that was out there, which is understandable. Troy hadn’t thought there was either, but here he is.

And he just witnessed two of the most talented and well-known players of the NHL come out to a bunch of weirdos from Ottawa. Crazy. Cool, but crazy.

“So, Roz. Shane.” Wyatt leans forward in his seat. “Want to tell us who *Jane* is?”

Rozanov bursts out laughing. Next to him, Hollander groans and buries his face in his hands.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Shane takes care of his boyfriend.

Chapter Notes

Here it is, the final chapter of this little fic. THANK YOU for all the enthusiasm for the boys and their friends, it is very much appreciated. And who knows, I might even write a little more about them at some point. 😊

ILYA

It's past ten o'clock when they arrive back at his place. Ilya is bone tired as well as mentally exhausted from the rollercoaster of a day. He'd quite happily discard all his clothes and drag Shane straight into bed, wrap himself around him and burrow into the sheets and not move again until the next morning. He won't even mind not having sex, he is that tired.

Shane, on the other hand, is wired. Ilya knows all too well that Shane's mind is still in overtime, still running circles around every conversation they had with every single person tonight. Shane's brain needs time to process and decompress, time to cool down. Especially after something as big as tonight.

So instead of heading straight for the bedroom, Ilya walks into the living room and grabs the remote control from the coffee table. "You wanna watch a game?"

Having hung up both their coats in the coat closet, Shane follows him at first but then takes a detour into the kitchen. "Yeah, sounds good," he says over his shoulder. "You want another drink? I'm making some herbal tea."

Ilya grimaces. He's flicking through the on-demand menu until he finds a replay of one the latest fixtures and presses play. There will be plenty of pre-game talk and interviews to allow them to change into something more comfortable and sort out their drinks. "Can of Coke, please?" he calls back. He's definitely not drinking any of Shane's heals-everything-except-broken-socks concoction. He chucks the remote onto the sofa and heads to the bedroom to change into a pair of sweats and a t-shirt.

The electric kettle in the kitchen is still going when he comes back into the living room, but he finds a cold can of Coke sitting on one of the coasters on the coffee table. The lights have

been dimmed, and the footstool has been moved closer to the sofa. In the kitchen, the kettle cuts off. Shane is puttering around the house somewhere. Ilya hears the downstairs toilet being flushed and the tap being turned on, then back off before the bathroom door clicks open. He hears Shane jog up the stairs and disappear into the bedroom.

By the time Shane comes back down in sweats and a hoodie, Ilya has finished making Shane's tea and lit the fire in the big fancy fireplace in the corner.

"What are we watching?" Shane asks. He flops down on the sofa and puts his feet up on the footstool.

"Boston-New York." Ilya places Shane's mug on another coaster on the coffee table, close enough for Shane to be able to reach it from where he's sitting.

"Thanks." Shane smiles. He looks tired but not unhappy. He pats the cushion next to him and Ilya doesn't have to be asked twice. Taking up almost the entirety of the rest of the sofa, he lies down and rests his head on Shane's lap. Shane's brain might still be online, but Ilya's is closer to an endorphin induced coma than anything functional so he might as well be prepared to fall asleep.

"Boston lost that one, didn't they?" Shane asks.

"Yes, but was a good game. Would've been better if I was still there."

Shane chuckles. "Of course it would."

This is good. This is safe. They know the score already, so they can watch without the emotional up and down that comes with anticipating a winner. Of having to choose a side. It's just hockey. They both went so far out of their comfort zone today, they both need something safe.

They do have to talk. But right now, Ilya is way past the point of putting his feelings into words, never mind into the right order. And he probably needs Galina's help for that. He and Shane jumped in with a big splash tonight and those usually cause ripples. He is of no illusion that there won't be repercussions.

He might have to start with telling Shane about Galina, but the 'Hey-I'm-seeing-a-therapist' conversation can wait for another day.

"Is Marlow back from his injury?" Shane asks as he reaches for his tea.

"Da. Been back a couple of weeks now, I think."

"Cool."

The game gets underway, and Ilya soon is pulled into the comfort of sharing space with Shane. It's warm and peaceful, speckled with nothing but the occasional comment about a sick pass or a particular hard hit on screen.

He must have fallen asleep, as he wakes to Shane running his fingers through Ilya's hair, his fingernails gently scraping over his scalp. It makes Ilya's skin tingle, spreading like liquid honey over his head and down his spine. It feels incredible. His body goes taut as it wants to cat-stretch into every possible direction all at once, but then the tension dissipates just as quickly, and he lets out a long sigh as he sinks even deeper into the cushions of the sofa.

Shane chuckles softly, giving Ilya's hair the lightest of tug. Ilya closes his eyes and hums at the divine pull on his scalp, then opens them again so he can look at Shane. Shane's face is bathed in flickers of lights from the TV and the fireplace, but Shane doesn't pay attention to either, his gaze soft and content, and solely focus on Ilya.

Ilya smiles. "You okay?"

"Mm-hmm." Shane smiles back. He looks just as blissed out as Ilya feels as he gently brushes a stray lock from Ilya's forehead.

Ilya wants to close his eyes but can't bear the thought of letting Shane out of his sight. This feels so good, and big, and *them*, and Ilya doesn't want to miss of single moment of it.

"Today was good," Shane says.

Ilya's breath hitches. "It was."

Shane reaches for Ilya's hand and brings it up to his lips to press a soft kiss to Ilya's palm. "I love you."

Ilya couldn't look away if he wanted to. "I love you too."

It feels raw. Exhilarating. Almost too good to be true, especially when only earlier today, Ilya didn't think he would find a way out, or forward, or even sideways. When he felt so unbearably alone and thought his heart was going to break for good.

But Shane came back. And on top of that, Ilya now has someone else who knows about them. And not just one person. *His* friends, and God, he hopes they'll be Shane's friends too at some point in the future, because he genuinely loves that bunch, but right now they are *his* friends. He might even be able to bring Shane to other socials again. Possibly not when the whole team is there, but he won't have to decline anymore, when Wyatt and Lisa invite him over for dinner on a night Shane is with him. Or he won't have to make up a story when Troy or Luca ask him about his weekends.

The whole idea is still a little foreign and so fucking fragile, but God, he hopes that it all holds up. That Shane hasn't sacrificed too much tonight. That neither of them will regret this come the morning.

Shane still hasn't taken his eyes off him. The sensation of Shane's fingers against his scalp is still delicious, and with his free hand, Ilya reaches over his head and tangles his finger in the fabric of Shane's sleeve. His whole body vibrates with something warm that can only be longing, and suddenly, Ilya wants nothing more than for Shane to touch him.

He swallows hard and squeezes Shane's hand. "Can you touch me?" It's merely a whisper, but the corner of Shane's mouth twitches. He's heard him.

Shane raises an eyebrow. He extracts his hand from Ilya's and places it over Ilya's pec. He splays his fingers, then, using his thumb, teases the fabric of Ilya's t-shirt over his nipple. "You mean here?"

Ilya half moans, half laughs. This is a conversation they know how to have. "Asshole."

Shane smirks. He holds Ilya's gaze and runs his hand further down Ilya's body until it comes to rest near the waistband of his sweats. All still agonisingly above the layer of Ilya's shirt. "Here?"

"No," Ilya breathes, because he knows what it does to Shane when his voice goes all husky and needy. He decides to take matters into his own hands and slowly pulls up the hem of his shirt until, finally — finally — the barrier is gone and Shane's fingers are touching his skin. Warm and tingling and so close to where Ilya wants them.

"Show me," Shane says.

Ilya feels drunk with how quickly his blood seems to rush from his head into his groin. He's loose and hard, and hot and cold; he wants to bury his face in the warmth and softness of Shane's hoodie, crawl into it with him until there is nothing left between them.

Shane looks just as dazed, his smile drowsy. He doesn't take his eyes off Ilya's, not once, when he starts teasing the skin around Ilya's happy trail with one hand while he continues to massage Ilya's scalp with the other.

Ilya's vision blurs as his eyelids grow heavy.

"Show me," Shane whispers, again.

It's like wading through molasses, but Ilya's hands finally find his own waistband, and he manages to lift his hips and pull his sweats and briefs down over his ass. The rush of air on his skin does nothing to calm his body, never mind what is going on between his legs, but when Shane's hands suddenly disappear from both, Ilya's stomach and his head, he feels like he's been stripped naked.

The panic of exposure only lasts a few seconds, and then Shane's hands are back. Gentle fingers run through his hair, and then he finally touches Ilya where Ilya wants him.

Ilya gasps, hips jolting. Shane has wrapped his hand around Ilya's length, warm and wet, almost too loose, and Ilya wants to tell him to stop teasing but also to keep going, and where the fuck did Shane find the lube? Then Shane starts moving and Ilya almost cries out.

It's all too much. Too good. The sensation of the gentle drag and pull on his hair, the heat building up in his groin. The way Shane watches as Ilya's mouth falls open, his breathing growing ragged, then louder still. His senses are on fire, and he can't take his eyes of Shane,

can't look away, because if he does, it might all just disappear, and he can't let that happen, he can't—

“It's okay,” Shane murmurs, his voice as soothing as the gentle touch against the shell of Ilya's ear. Shane is hard too, the fabric of his sweats straining against Ilya's cheek. And yet Shane just watches, pupils dark and blown but grounding, as he takes Ilya apart with his hands. “Baby, it's okay. Let go.”

Baby.

Ilya unravels. Let's go in a way he hasn't for a long time, arching, legs restless, writhing. He clings to the sleeves of Shane's hoodie with clenched fists, holding on for dear life. Shane's hand speeds up around his length, and Shane doesn't use endearments, and Shane's eyes are just as hooded as Ilya's, and Ilya still can't look away. The pleasure hits him with such force, he comes with a cry, hot and hard, his whole body growing taut, tumbling into whiteness as he spills onto his stomach.

The burn in his groin is delicious. For a moment he feels completely weightless. Free. Safe. When the high ebbs away, Shane is smiling down at him, his hand placed over Ilya's racing heart, rising and falling with the up and down of Ilya's chest.

Loved.

It's pure bliss. Ilya sucks in a deep breath and buries his face against Shane's hoodie, revelling in how it smells of fresh laundry detergent but also of Shane. Of home. With a long sigh, he nuzzles against Shane's belly.

Something damp touches his chin and he flinches, shifts slightly so he can see what it is. He smirks and raises a teasing eyebrow when he realises Shane has come in his own pants.

Shane just grins and shrugs. “I can't help it. You're hot.”

Ilya laughs and then has to stretch again because apparently his body is not quite over what just happened as it wants to lock up in another wave of pleasure.

“Feels good?” Shane asks quietly, gently stroking Ilya's hair again.

“Hm-mmm.” Ilya closes his eyes and burrows back into Shane's lap. He feels heavy and sated. He could quite happily fall asleep like this, even with his pants pulled down and his come drying on his skin.

“Don't fall asleep,” Shane chuckles. “We need to shower.”

“In a minute,” Ilya mumbles. He clumsily pulls his sweats back up over his ass. They have all night. And tomorrow morning. And the rest of their lives, hopefully.

On the TV, the third period is about to start. The score is 3 – 2 for the Admirals already, which is what the game finished on. Ilya must have dozed off pretty swiftly earlier because he didn't catch any of the goals. Apart from Scott Hunter's, which was shown on every News reel on the actual night of the game.

“I had fun tonight,” Shane suddenly says.

Ilya turns his head so he can look at his boyfriend. He’s still afraid they will regret what they did tonight, but when he meets Shane’s eyes, he finds an unusual calmness in them that he hasn’t witnessed very often before. Maybe even only once, the day they had said “I love you” to each other for the first time.

“They are nice guys,” Shane continues. “Even Troy Barrett.”

Ilya snorts. “He was too busy making heart eyes at Harris to be an asshole. But yes. Even he is nice. And also gay.”

Shane laughs at that. “He’s very different from what I expected. To be honest, they all are.”

Ilya watches Shane curiously. “You’re not panicking.” It’s a statement, rather than a question.

“Oh, I will be,” Shane assures him with a smirk. “Most definitely. But not tonight.” Then he shifts and nudges Ilya to get moving. “Come on. Shower. We know there are no more goals, anyway.”

Ilya grumbles in mock-offence but pushes himself up and reaches for the remote control. His can of Coke still sits unopened on the coffee table, but he ignores it as he switches off the TV and pulls Shane with him towards the stairs.

They just came out to eight more people tonight. Actually, nine, because Hazy will definitely tell Lisa. And if nine people can accept and be normal about Ilya Rozanov being in love with Shane Hollander, maybe someday the rest of the world can too. Not all of them will, he knows that, but for tonight he’ll keep believing they might.

He undresses on the way through the bedroom and follows Shane into the shower. They can panic together tomorrow.

Not tonight. Tonight, it is just him and Shane, and the rest of the world can fuck off.

End Notes

Rachel Reid, you are my queen! I absolutely adore the books and feel very lucky to see the characters come to life on screen and to experience the fandom taking off the way it does. The best times to be a fan. 🥰💕🥰

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