Accidental Major in International Relations

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Accidental Major in International Relations

by wolliwillow

Summary

Shane Hollander shows up to university excited for another year of being the best at what he does. Unfortunately, the man who beat him at last year's World Prospect Cup is also there, and Ilya Rozanov hasn't gotten any less annoying. Or any worse at hockey.

Now if only Shane could focus on the ice, and stop thinking about nice hands, pretty lips, and the sound of his name in a Russian accent.

OR: They play together in college, and discoveries are made a little quicker.

Chapter 1: Can I Make It Anymore Obvious?

Chapter Notes

> Succumbing to the death grip this pairing has on me.
>
> Also, this fic uses Canadian spelling because I am Canadian, and Shane Hollander is Canadian, and this piece of media inspires hitherto unknown levels of patriotism within me. Hope you enjoy <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shane Hollander had always been the best.

From the ripe age of six, when his mom had first signed him up for a youth team and he had wobbled onto the ice in rented skates and a hand-me-down helmet, he had been a phenom. Not only a prodigy, blessed with natural talent, but consistently the hardest worker in every rink, and in every weight room. And since that auspicious day in 1996, not a second had gone by where Shane Hollander was not the best damn player on every damn team he ever played for, often by a considerable margin.

Until six months ago.

Six months ago, Shane Hollander had shown up two hours early to his very first practice for Boston University's men's ice hockey team.

Truth be told, he hadn't been all that keen to go to college, but BU had offered him a very nice full-ride scholarship, and his mother hadn't been particularly happy about the possibility of her son never receiving an education. While there wasn't a bigger hockey fan on the planet than Yuna Hollander, she was also a sensible woman with an intimate understanding of how one injury could change everything, and didn't want to see her son end up with no prospects should the worst happen. So, here he was.

It wasn't unusual for Shane to be the first to show up for practice, but today in particular he had wanted to start off his college career on the right foot with all his new teammates and coaches. The instincts of a teacher's pet never died, he guessed.

So, at 4:54, he entered his new locker room ready for 7 o'clock practice, only to be more than a little shocked to see someone else already there.

Their back was turned to him, but their stature alone told Shane that this was another hockey player. The figure was in the process of changing into a black compression shirt, and the movement of *very* visible muscles tensing across the bare expanse of his back honestly made Shane a little jealous. Despite hitting the gym once a day, if not twice when he had time to sneak it in, he couldn't seem to bulk up like that no matter what he did.

As the stranger fought to flip their shirt right-side-out, Shane couldn't help but notice his back was also sprinkled with moles, creating a pretty constellation of brown dots across otherwise clear, pale skin.

What the fuck, Shane. Who the fuck notices that.

"Uh, hey," Shane said, breaking the silence as he fully entered into the locker room, letting the door swing shut behind him. "Nice to meet you. I'm Shane Hollander, a freshman."

The figure stopped fighting with the fabric in his hands and turned at the sound of another voice in the room. Suddenly faced with a pair of hauntingly familiar hazel eyes, Shane realized he maybe shouldn't have listened to Yuna Hollander, and actually college had been a terrible mistake.

Fucking Ilya Rozanov.

The face that had haunted Shane's nightmares since the World Prospect Cup one year ago was now staring him in the eyes not four feet away. Complete with the exact same crooked smile he had worn after scoring the winning goal against Team Canada. After giving Shane Hollander his very first silver medal.

"Yes, I know. We have met." His smirk grew into that stupid, smug expression Rozanov was known for. "When I beat you, yes?"

Shane took a moment to recover from the shock of seeing his (self-proclaimed) arch rival materialize in front of his very eyes, and then responded eloquently, "What the fuck? What are you doing here?"

"Well, this is hockey rink. I play hockey."

"Yes, I got that, I mean what are you doing *here*? Weren't you gonna declare for the draft?"

"Oh, Hollander keeps up with my career plan. I'm very touched."

Shane scoffed. He really was an asshole. "You're not answering the question."

Rozanov shrugged casually, making Shane suddenly aware that he was still shirtless, as his chest shifted with the movement. "I change my mind. Is good opportunity, no? And so lucky for you. Now you won't have to lose to me again."

Shane clenched his jaw. "Your team played dirty, Rozanov, and you know it. Besides, last time I checked you only scored once, and I had two goals that game."

"Oh, but still you lose. And is not *dirty*. Is called being aggressive and taking advantage of all aspects of the game." He sagely held up one finger as he explained, and Shane barked out an annoyed laugh.

"Oh, did you practice that defence with your English tutor? It's fucking playing dirty, Rozanov. If we faced off again I would have won."

“Isn’t it ‘we’ Hollander? Hockey is team sport, they tell me.”

“Oh, fuck off.”

Rozanov moved closer to where Shane was standing in the middle of the locker room, where he had been frozen in place since the beginning of this horrible conversation.

He was disappointed to note that the height difference hadn’t changed in the last year. As much as he had tried to will himself into a late growth spurt, Rozanov still stood at least a head above him. It was infuriating. He could feel his face getting red with anger as he approached.

“I think this will be interesting year. Sad for you, of course, to be second best player on the team, but happy for you, because you get to watch me score goals up close.” And he fucking winked.

Shane tried (and failed) to return his face to its natural complexion. “As if there’s a world where you score more goals than me this season, Rozanov.”

“Oh, I think is this world, Hollander.” He leaned in close for maximum mocking effect, and as he said the words Shane could smell a faint hint of tobacco on his breath.

The memory hit him like a truck. Standing outside on a freezing winter's day in Regina, Saskatchewan, holding out his hand awkwardly to the only kid he had thought it was worth introducing himself to. It had been the same smell, then, too.

“Jesus Christ, you’re still smoking? Are you even old enough to buy cigarettes in this country?”

Rozanov shrugged, as if the concept of possibly breaking the law on a student visa didn’t phase him in the slightest. “I’m 18, what’s the problem?”

“Because the legal age here is fucking 21.” Shane scoffed. “Shit, there’s gonna be no competition at all. Either your lungs are gonna collapse during conditioning or you’re gonna get deported.”

Rozanov tilted his head in a way that made Shane think maybe he didn’t catch all of those words, but he was clearly the type of guy not to let a little thing like *understanding* stop him from being the most annoying person on the fucking planet. “You are cute when you are angry, Hollander. Like little kitten.”

Certain the colour of his face was now rapidly approaching tomato, Shane tried to keep his voice steady. “I will kill you. I will throw you under the Zamboni and no one will ever know.”

“Aw, you think you could throw me? But then who would lead the team?”

“Me. Obviously.”

“Oh, I think you are just scared, Hollander. To be second best.”

“I am *not* scared, because I’m going to skate fucking circles around you, and score more goals than you, and be captain of this team.”

“Hmmm…” Rozanov put a hand on his chin and pretended to analyze him, eyes rolling up and down Shane’s body like physical weights. They were still uncomfortably close, and the scent of tobacco was going to Shane’s head. That must be why he was feeling a little dizzy. “No, I don’t think so. You are still short, and backhand is still weak.”

Shane bristled. “Like fuck it’s not. How would you even know, we haven't played against each other in like a year.”

“Hollander keeps up with me, yes? He should know I keep up with him.” The grin that split his face could only be described as wolfish. Or maybe shit-eating. Shane didn’t know, only that he wanted to punch it off him.

“I can’t fucking believe this.” Shane couldn’t take the proximity anymore and moved back a little, shaking his head. If he had to put up with this for the next year, the next *four* years maybe, he was going to pop a blood vessel.

“I know. Is a lot to take in.” Rozanov gestured obnoxiously to his (still half-nude) body. Shane stoically did not look. “You are not first person to call me unbelievable.”

“Good thing I didn’t call you that, then. Now can you move so I can find my locker. Some of us are here to actually play hockey.”

“What do you mean, locker is right here.” And he stepped aside so that for the first time Shane could see behind him two stalls, labelled clear as day, ROZANOV and HOLLANDER. Next door neighbours.

“Jesus Christ.”

Since that day in early September it had been a fraught six months of teasing, fighting, chirping, and all the other synonyms you can think of for getting on each other’s fucking nerves. Or at least Shane’s nerves. He could never tell what Rozanov was thinking behind that stupid crooked smile.

But he couldn’t deny, the hockey was good. Great, even.

Shane had never played with someone who could match up to his level before, and when they were on the ice it was like magic. They might fight like cats and dogs in the locker room, on the bench, and any other time they happened to run into each other on campus, but the second they stepped into that rink it couldn’t be denied there was no better pairing anywhere outside the NHL.

Their coach liked to joke that their chemistry alone had been worth every dollar of tuition, and as much as it made Shane fume a little to hear, it was true. On the ice, at least. But that didn't mean he had to enjoy his presence off of it.

But Shane had a bigger problem outside of constantly holding himself back from first-degree murder (because trust, he *had* premeditated upon it). The problem was that recently Shane couldn't help… *noticing* Rozanov.

Of course, he sort of had to. They were together every morning and every night for practice, and spent most weekends on the road together for games and tournaments.

But this recent kind of noticing wasn't of the sort Shane did with all his other teammates, like watching out to see if they were favouring one leg after a particularly brutal hit, or keeping track of where they were on a power play. He was noticing things about Rozanov that seemingly had nothing to do with hockey, and it was annoying him to no end.

Like how his light brown curls looked fresh out of the shower after practice, pushed up and away from his face. Or how defined his shoulder muscles were when he did pull-ups in those stupid t-shirts with the sleeves cut off. How his lips curved up when he was teasing, revealing a set of chipped teeth that shouldn't be as charming as they were. How his smile after scoring a goal was at its most wide and genuine, and he always seemed to look at Shane first to celebrate.

He just couldn't stop noticing. And it was driving him insane.

It didn't help that Rozanov was a smug bastard who had quickly learned that casual flirting was the quickest and simplest route to getting a reaction out of him, and thus had no qualms about doing it *all the fucking time*.

Like on media day, when the two were taking pictures together for the school website, and he had casually leaned on his stick, looking Shane up and down like he was trying to undress him with his eyes.

That alone would have been enough to annoy him, but then he said, very matter-of-factly, "You look pretty."

Shane had spluttered something out in response about not being the only one with a painted face, but Rozanov's smirk had only grown.

"True," He had responded, "But I don't look pretty."

It was infuriating that he rose to the bait every time.

Now, Shane had… looked at men like that before, don't get him wrong. He had taken some lingering glances at the barista at his favourite cafe, or ogled the star of the latest stupid action movie a little too long. God knows he didn't always order pizza from the same campus shit-hole because of the quality crust. He was well aware that he found men attractive, in a way he sort of never had with women.

But this wasn't a stranger in passing, or even a casual acquaintance. This was Ilya fucking Rozanov. His teammate, rival, unfortunate locker-buddy, and the only person in the world truly capable of getting under Shane Hollander's skin.

Which led him to where he now found himself. At the campus gym on a Friday night just after 9 pm, running furiously on the treadmill in an effort to distract himself from the horrible thoughts in his horrible brain.

The gym was pretty empty, all things considered. Turns out most college students didn't want to spend their precious Friday night working out in a sweaty, dim-lit basement. But Shane had never really been much for partying, or drinking. He'd get too in his head about the consequences it would have on practice the next day. The inevitable hangover, the grogginess that clung to his muscles in a way no amount of Gatorade could cure. This meant he probably wasn't all that much fun to be around at parties, so over the years he found it easier to just avoid them entirely.

Rozanov was probably partying, Shane thought. Fucker was always in the background of someone's blurry photos taking shots or dancing with some girl whose name he probably didn't even know. He was quite the campus celebrity, so surely there was no shortage of invites coming his way.

But Shane definitely wasn't thinking about Rozanov. At all. He was running, and very, very focused on running, and that was it.

Until, out of the corner of his eye he noticed someone getting onto the treadmill right next to him. Awkward on a normal day, absolutely insane behavior when *every* machine in the gym was empty. He glanced to the side, ready to politely move to the weight section to avoid whatever weirdo had arrived, and almost instinctively rolled his eyes at the sight that greeted him.

Of course. Think of the devil, or something.

"So lonely, Hollander. Friday night and spending it all alone in very sad gym." Rozanov tsked a little as he slowly sped his machine up. To exactly one notch higher than what Shane was running at. Fucking asshole.

"Fuck off, Rozanov. Someone has to take this seriously." And because he was someone who would die on any hill at all if it meant beating Ilya Rozanov, Shane clicked his treadmill speed higher to match. "Besides, aren't you here too? What, no shots of vodka and leagues of adoring sorority girls to have fun with tonight?"

"Hollander…" Rozanov's eyes lit up, like they always did when he managed to pull a reaction out of him. "Are you jealous? Next time I only do shot with you, then."

"*Not* jealous, just annoyed at your lack of focus." He forced the words out of teeth clenched together. *Click*. One speed higher.

"Oh, but I am very focused. More than you, if we are comparing goals. Maybe you are just boring." *Click*.

“I have *one* less than you, and there’s still two months of league play left. Talk shit when you’ve actually won.” *Click.* “And it’s because I actually fucking pass. Or do you not look at the assist stats because you’re so far behind?”

Rozanov laughed. The kind of genuine, throaty chuckle that was another one of those things Shane hated himself for noticing. “Why would I need to pass when the best chance of scoring is me?” *Click.*

“You are such an asshole.” At this point they were both in something resembling a full-on sprint, and Shane couldn’t bring himself to respond anymore than that, choosing to prioritize getting actual oxygen into his lungs.

“Yes. But you like it, I think.”

Fuck. Fuck this.

Shane had come here to get away from this feeling of his heart beating a little too loud and face getting a little too red. And now Rozanov was raising an eyebrow at him and that hope had been completely cast aside.

“I need a refill.” Shane slammed down on the emergency stop, quickly walking (*not* running away, thank you) to the water fountain on the other side of the gym. Which was totally unfair, because he had obviously been running for way longer than Rozanov, and now it was going to look like he had *lost*.

Of course Rozanov followed, because everything he did was calculated precisely to cause Shane maximum annoyance, and he happened to be really good at that particular sort of math. Shane resolved to ignore his presence, as he stuck his water bottle under the fountain and patiently waited for it to fill back up.

“What, done already? I thought you were not smoker, Hollander. Cardio should be better.”

“Can I not have one evening of peace?”

“Of course not. You like having someone to compete. Makes you work harder.”

Shane frowned, glaring at the flow of water from the fountain. That was maybe a little bit true, but he wasn’t going to admit it. “I like working out in silence, actually. Helps me focus.”

“Oh, now I *know* that is untrue. You are always listening to that angry girl in headphones. What’s her name, April?”

“Oh my god, Avril Lavigne?” Shane snorted, and then got oddly embarrassed at the fact that Rozanov had actually looked at what music he played when he worked out. Trying to hide his flush, he continued, “Well yeah, she’s not the most annoying person on the planet, so, maybe I only prefer silence to *him* speaking.”

“Oh, so I am exception? I am special to Shane Hollander?”

That was when Shane made the mistake of turning to look, ready to defend his honour from such insane accusations, and was brought suddenly a little too close to a sweaty Ilya Rozanov.

Breathing a bit heavier than usual, he was leaning up against the wall to look down at Shane with those infuriating extra four inches. They were really too close. His eyes were crinkled up at the corners, a look of amusement dancing on the edge of his features, and Shane was struck, stupidly, by how long his eyelashes were.

He watched a stray bead of sweat make its way from the top of his sharp cheekbone, to the bottom of his jaw, and eventually fall off its trail as Rozanov swallowed. Shane caught the bob of his Adam's apple.

Jesus Christ stop staring.

Shane forced his eyes back up to meet hazel ones, now less amused and more filled with a sharp, focused intensity that he didn't want to think about too long, or his shorts were going to get a little too tight in the middle of a very public gym.

"No. You're not." Shane lied. And this time, he maybe did run away.

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When he got back to the privacy of his own dorms, Shane shut the door and pressed his back against the wood. His heart rate was elevated and breathing heavy, for reasons mostly unrelated to the workout he had just cut short.

It was probably just because he was pent up. That was why these reactions were being pulled out of him so easily. He hadn't been with anyone since his high school girlfriend, and even then they hadn't really… done much. At the time Shane had yet to really figure out his own preferences, and his abysmal sexual encounters with women sort of reflected that.

So Shane was probably just frustrated, and Ilya Rozanov happened to be the nearest available body for his subconscious to latch onto. The fact that he was one of the hottest men Shane had ever seen, and often around him in various stages of undress, were just contributors to the problem. It was only natural that his body was reacting.

Pulling off his shorts and throwing them haphazardly in the direction of his hamper, that's what he kept telling himself.

He leaned his back against the door and let his hand wander down his front. At the first press of a hand against the front of his boxers, the tension eased out of his shoulders and he sighed at the instant relief it brought. He had been sporting an embarrassing hard-on since the gym, and it had only flagged a little during the walk home, as his mind kept providing him with inconvenient flashbacks of bare arms, fierce eyes, and slow-dripping sweat.

But he definitely wasn't thinking about that right now, as he pushed down the last bit of offending fabric and finally, *finally*, wrapped a hand around himself. He was thinking

about… that one porn star he really liked, with the broad shoulders and light brown hair. Yes. That would work.

The direct contact of skin on skin pulled an audible groan from his lips, as he started with slow, simple movements. With the exhaustion catching up, he sank to the ground, letting himself succumb to the growing warmth building low in his stomach.

His hand was definitely too dry, but the lube in his nightstand felt a million miles away right now. He took his hand out of his boxers just long enough to spit onto his palm before returning to his initial strokes, the glide made much smoother now.

He thought back to the last video he had watched, and tried to picture himself in that position.

Continuing to stroke himself steadily, he let the mental image wash over him—he'd be on his back, his partner leaning over him, *covering him*, broad and powerful enough to hold him down if he really wanted to. Large hands would wander, across his shoulders, his chest, his abs. Pinching and prodding, leaving marks to trace the path they'd been on. His mouth would follow his hands, going from warm and soothing to just on the edge of pain. Leaving more marks, but this time a little deeper, and a little darker.

Until finally, after enough teasing, a hand would snake down between his legs and finally put pressure right where he wanted it.

"Hollander." The voice would say.

But that wasn't right. They would call him Shane, wouldn't they? And he was certain his favourite porn star didn't have a Russian accent.

The figure in his imagination looked up from where it was busy pressing languid kisses to his chest, and Shane gasped as bright amber eyes flashed up at him. He quickly tried to push them away.

No, you can do this. Just think of porn.

But as much as Shane attempted to will the image to disperse, the figure leaning above him continued to morph into one with pretty, shiny curls, the stranger's strong back suddenly filled with a smattering of brown moles.

And as the visual got clearer, and the edges more defined, the pleasure got sharper. He couldn't stop his hand from moving faster.

The setting had changed, too. Now, they weren't in some bland, nonspecific bedroom, but back at the gym, and Shane had been pressed right onto the smooth tiles of the locker room floor. The hands pressing him down were big enough to completely engulf his wrists, and strong enough that he couldn't run away this time, even if he wanted to.

"You think I didn't see you looking, Hollander? You think I don't know this is what you want?" The Rozanov in Shane's mind spoke low and seductive, words flowing off his tongue

a little freer than they maybe would have in real life.

He whimpered, warmth tightening in his gut like a curled fist as he imagined what dirty words could be uttered if Rozanov finally put his big fucking mouth to good use.

"Hollander likes to pretend he is such a good boy. Always nice, always polite. What would everyone think if they knew all he really wanted was to get fucked?"

"No," Shane couldn't tell if he was speaking out loud, at this point. The pleasure had dulled his mind into a haze as he desperately chased his release. "No, I can be good."

"Yeah? You can be good for me? Let yourself be used by me right here? Where anyone could walk in and see you moaning on the dirty bathroom floor?"

"Yes." It came out like a pant. The sounds filling the small, echoey chamber of his dorm were downright obscene, but he couldn't stop now. Not with Rozanov clear in his mind and a keen, cutting heat biting further into his body. At this point, he didn't think he really wanted to stop. "Whatever you want."

"Of course it's whatever I want, Hollander." The Rozanov in his imagination leaned in close, biting his ear a little meanly before moving to pepper his face with quick, sharp kisses. *"Because you are only this easy for me."*

Shane couldn't believe that even in his own imagination Rozanov was an asshole. *You like it,* he had said at the gym. Apparently, he really hadn't been wrong.

"Isn't that right?"

He whined. He wasn't sure he even wanted to admit that to himself.

"Yes. Only for you."

Fantasy-Rozanov grinned, eyes narrowing, and sped up the pace. *"See that was not so hard to say, was it Hollander? Now be a good boy and come for me."*

Pleasure pierced through his whole body in a sudden, unstoppable climax, as his head reeled back and hit the door. Shane quickly pressed a free hand to his mouth to try and stifle the moans that he was sure the walls here were not thick enough to keep contained. He groaned low, heat washing through his body in waves, and a tingling sensation reached to the very tips of his fingers.

Damn.

After the pleasure had waned, he took a few breaths to get his heartbeat under control, and slowly come back down from the high. He took a moment to look around at the unfortunate mess he had made, right in the entryway.

His eye caught on an econ textbook that he had stupidly left on the ground next to his door, and that was now dirty with more than just coffee stains. Hilariously, that was the visual reality check needed to bring him unceremoniously back into post-orgasm clarity.

Oh my god. I just jacked off to Ilya fucking Rozanov.

I just jacked off to Ilya Rozanov, and came harder than I have in… maybe ever.

Jesus, do I like the thought of being held down like that?

As the thoughts ran through Shane's mind at a breakneck pace, he quickly scrambled to grab a wad of tissue papers and try miserably to erase all evidence of what had just happened. God, how was he ever going to go into a gym locker room again with a straight face?

How was he ever going to look Rozanov in the eyes again?

He shook his head. No, it was fine. It was like he had thought earlier. He was just pent up, frustrated from the unintentional celibacy streak he had been on since entering college. Now that all the tension had been gotten out of the way, surely it would be better.

He could be normal, and keep thinking about Rozanov just as an annoying rival who now happened to be his teammate. And who happened to be hot enough to inspire the occasional moment of weakness.

Yeah. Everything was fine.

About a week later, Shane found himself a few minutes walk from campus, sitting in a coffee shop that he had recently been informed by Rose was *hip* and *trendy*.

Shane had met Rose Landry, a gorgeous student from the theatre department, on the very first day of class in a gen-ed lecture they both just so happened to take. The two had clicked almost immediately, despite the fact that Shane usually looked like he had just come from the gym and Rose like she had just stepped off a catwalk, and they frequently got together to study, grab lunch, or just hang out.

Shane liked having a friend outside of the hockey team. It made him really feel like he was getting the *college experience*, or something. And Rose was funny, nice, and pretty. The exact sort of woman that he sometimes desperately wished he could fall in love with.

Quickly pushing that mildly depressing thought out of mind, he caught a glimpse of the woman herself waving excitedly at him from outside the café window. She was bundled up in a comedically thick scarf, a long, fur-lined coat, and matching black toque.

Ever since The Incident, as he had now taken to calling it in his brain, he had been trying to get out of the dorms a little more. He couldn't exactly help that every time his eyes drifted over to the entryway, his thoughts took a turn to subjects that he was trying very hard not to think about. So, when Rose had asked if he wanted to go out for lunch together, even though it was -15°C and almost on the edge of a blizzard, Shane had immediately said yes.

Rose ran up to hug him, leaving little damp spots on his shirt from where the snowflakes had clung onto her jacket. As always when they went out together, he felt more than a little underdressed.

“So good to see you! It’s been a minute, how have you been?” She started the process of taking off all the outer layers necessary to survive February in Boston, and sat down across from him.

“Can’t complain. Just been busy, lately.”

“I’m sure, only a couple months left until the playoffs, right? Not to mention midterms. I’m sure you’re swamped.”

“Well, I’ve not had a psychotic break yet, but things can always get worse. How have you been?”

“Oh, same old. Doing ridiculous things to get an A in ‘Modern Improv’ and stuff like that.”

Shane laughed. He always thought it was cool that Rose did acting. He was so hopeless in front of a camera that even his five minute post game interviews were awkward and stilted.

“Have you ordered? I’m gonna go grab a coffee.”

“I can get my own drink, Rose.”

“Shane, sit down. I’m doing this because I am the most amazing friend in the whole world and want to do something nice for you. Now, what do you want?”

“Fine, Jesus. Just a double-double then?”

“Oh my god, you’re so Canadian. I’m getting you a cappuccino.”

Shane laughed again as she walked away, and when she returned, fancy coffee in hand, he couldn’t help but admit that the choice had been the right one. It was really good.

Just as he was about to go back in for another sip, the door opened again and he shuddered a little at the hit of cold outside air that followed. Turning instinctively to see who it was, he locked eyes with the teammate that he just couldn’t seem to avoid these days. Looking equally as surprised.

Fuck, he could not catch a break. It was like they had magnets in their fucking coats, or something.

He saw Rozanov take an initial surprised glance between him and Rose, and an emotion that Shane couldn’t quite parse flashed across his face. But it was only for a moment, and before he could figure out what *that* had been, the crooked grin was back up as per usual. He sauntered over to their table, smile widening.

“Hollander! Surprised to see you out in public. Was starting to think you had allergy to the sun.” Rozanov’s hand came down to rest on his shoulder, and Shane flinched a little at the

sudden touch. He was painfully aware of the point of contact where Rozanov's middle finger was idly laying against the bare skin of his neck.

"Now I can't even get a coffee in peace, Rozanov? What are you stalking me or something?"

He dramatically gasped, "You wound me, Hollander. And in front of such beautiful lady!" He flashed a flirty (and admittedly pretty charming) look at Rose, and Shane snorted.

"You are unbelievable. Shouldn't you order something and not just harass paying customers?" Shane looked up, and was met with that same charming grin, but now directed right at him. He felt Rozanov's finger move, grazing just the slightest bit back and forth across his nape.

Trying really hard not to let on how hyper-aware he was of the tiniest movement, or god forbid do something idiotic like *shiver*, he continued, "Besides, I didn't know you were capable of consuming anything that wasn't alcoholic."

Rozanov's grin turned a little sharper. "Oh, I remember. Hollander wants to drink with me. Don't worry, time will come. But now, are you not going to introduce me to your pretty date?"

Rose giggled at the antics in front of her, eyes narrowed slightly in a way that Shane found honestly a little concerning. "Well you need no introduction on my behalf, Ilya Rozanov. You're quite famous around here, and I hear about you plenty from Shane."

Shane groaned at the phrasing, and Rozanov couldn't hide the unabashed delight from his voice, "Oh? Hollander talks about me?"

"No. *No*. It's called *complaining*, asshole."

"Oh sure, of course. Do you *complain* about how many goals I score? Or maybe how handsome I am?"

"Get fuck-"

"Anyways! It's always nice to meet a friend of a friend." Rose jumped in and cut off what was clearly just going to be an expletive-filled rant. "My name is Rose, by the way."

"Rose. Pretty name for pretty girl. I am concerned about why you choose to spend time with Hollander, though." He leaned over the table, hand still rubbing absentminded circles on Shane's neck, to whisper conspiratorially, "He is very boring."

Rose let out a laugh, which Shane found frankly a little insulting. Apparently, it showed on his face because she continued, "Aw, but he's cute isn't he?"

Rozanov made eye contact with Shane, who was too embarrassed at the conversation to properly respond, and spoke lowly, "Mm. Very cute."

Shane hoped there would be a day when he could come face-to-face with Ilya Rozanov and not end up in the range of crimson to scarlet. Today, however, was not going to be that day.

“See, like that.” The almost predatory look was back on Rozanov’s face. “When he blushes you can see all his freckles.”

“One of these days I’m going to punch you.”

“And that will be a fight you lose, Hollander.” With one last annoying wink, his hand finally lifted from where it had felt like a brand on Shane’s back. “Alright, have a nice date! I get to-go, and leave you in peace.”

Rose nicely said goodbye, with more politeness than Shane thought the situation really demanded, and he watched warily as Rozanov went through the motions of ordering, scowling at the way he had the barista giggling like she had never heard a funnier joke in her life. How everyone that bastard came into contact with ended up charmed by his demeanour, Shane had no idea, and witnessing it in person always made him feel somewhat sick to his stomach.

Only after he had visual confirmation that Rozanov had bought his coffee and left the building did he turn back to the table, just to find Rose calmly surveying him with the oddest look on her face.

“... What?”

And at that exact moment, it seemed like a thought came to her with the swiftness and surety of a lightning bulb above a cartoon character. Her eyes widened comically.

“Oh my god. *Oh my god.* You want to fuck him.”

“Rose! What the fuck, no I do *not*. And Jesus- can you keep it down?”

“Oh, so you want *him* to fuck *you*?”

“Rose, this is a public space.” Shane whisper-yelled, wanting nothing more than to dig himself a hole, crawl into it, and promptly pass away. His face felt too hot, and suddenly he didn’t know what to do with his hands. He looked around to see where the nearest customers were sitting, and make sure no one was looking in his direction.

Rose slapped her thigh emphatically as she continued, “I can’t believe I’ve been so blind. To think I was actually momentarily convinced by the little ‘hated rival’ charade you go on about. No, everything makes so much more sense now.”

“Rose. Rose, please listen to me. The man is a dick. Mostly, I want to punch him, and occasionally that feeling moves up a degree into strangulation.”

“Oh please, Shane, you can stop with the macho athlete bullshit. I have eyes. I can see the way you just looked at him. Besides, all that tension just makes it hotter.” She winked.

Shane sputtered, incapable of coming up with any real defence. She had unfortunately hit the nail directly on the head. Of course he looked at Rozanov *like that*. Rozanov, as he had come to be painfully aware as of late, was extremely attractive. And unfortunately, after The Incident, all his indecent thoughts hadn’t actually gone away, like he had hoped.

In fact, they were probably worse.

“Listen, Shane, my lips are sealed okay?” Rose calmed down a little and put her hands up in a display of peace, looking Shane dead in the eyes before continuing, “Nothing you tell me in confidence will ever be shared with anyone else, alright? I promise.”

Shane allowed himself to breathe a little easier, realizing that the conversation had made him unconsciously tense up. He may be able to admit his sexuality to himself these days, in the privacy of his own head, but he supposed it was another beast entirely when someone else saw right through you. He hadn’t realized how much innate fear he still had bottled up about the whole thing.

“Ok…” He forced himself to take a deep breath. This was Rose. It was fine. “He’s hot, so what.”

“Oh my god, I knew it! Damn, frankly I’m a little relieved. I was gonna start taking it personally if you went another six months without making a move on me. Now I can be at peace knowing it’s because you want to make a move on *him*.”

“I’m not going to *make a move* on anyone, Rose. He’s my teammate, an unregulated asshole at the best of times, and also very straight.”

At that, one of Rose’s eyebrows quirked up a little, and her lips turned down. “Uh… does *he* know that Shane?”

“What are you talking about?”

“About being straight? Because I’ve been to enough parties to hear that Ilya Rozanov isn’t exactly known for being picky about that sort of thing.”

“... What?”

“I don’t know. I’ve not seen anything damning, mind you, just heard whispers through the grapevine. I kind of thought it was just wishful thinking from the gay community, to be honest, but that conversation you just forced me to third-wheel was more than enough to change my mind.” She whistled, “I mean, your freckles? What sort of straight man notices another guy’s freckles.”

Shane’s hand unconsciously moved to cover the bridge of his nose, where he knew the smattering of dots across his face were at their densest. The possibility that Rozanov might not be straight had only come to him in occasional moments of weakness since their little run in at the gym, and he usually shook them away from his imagination pretty quickly.

“Plus, did you see the way he was acting about you hanging out with me? He was totally jealous.”

“Yeah, jealous of *me* maybe. I mean, he called you pretty like ten times.”

Rose snorted, “Oh my god, Shane. You’re a fucking idiot.” Then she sighed a little wistfully, “Let’s just say I know what attraction looks like. And I would *kill* for a guy to look at me like

that."

Shane rolled his eyes and scoffed, "He doesn't look at me like *anything*. Except maybe annoyance, or something."

"Shane, I love you, but if you think *that* was annoyance then you should get your eyes checked."

Shane frowned, and continued to sip at his cappuccino so he didn't have to contribute to the conversation anymore. It was now lukewarm in his white-knuckled grip.

College really had been a terrible mistake.

It had now been eight months since Shane Hollander had first entered the BU men's hockey locker room and been faced with the unwelcome sight of Ilya Rozanov, and it had been at least two months, maybe longer if he really cared to admit it, since he had started having even more unwelcome *thoughts* of Ilya Rozanov.

But now, none of that mattered, because they were in the semifinal of the 2009 NCAA Division 1 championships, favored to win by nearly every talking head that had been asked to weigh in. It was practically unheard of, for a team led in scoring by two freshmen, but with those two freshmen being Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, perhaps not particularly surprising.

And if there was one thing capable of averting Shane's attention from internal struggles and honing it single-mindedly on an external goal, it was hockey. Nothing, not even a crisis of global proportions, was going to shake his concentration on winning this fucking game.

It was the third period of the semifinals, a close match that had, up until this point, been absolutely nasty. Shane didn't even think Team Russia had been this dirty in the Prospect Cup, and he *still* had to hear his mom complain about the shitty reffing in that match every time they called. Minnesota State had spent more time in the penalty box than out of it (although not as much as they deserved) and yet frustratingly the score was still tied at 2-2.

Shane lined up for the next face-off, not even bothering to glance at whoever they sent to match up with him. He was focused with laser intensity on only two things: the ice beneath his stick, and the sound of the whistle. This was a battle that he simply would not lose.

After a few tense seconds, the whistle blew. The puck dropped, and Shane was off. Past one player. Past two. Past a third, and then before anyone knew what hit them, open ice.

This was his moment. Nothing left but him and the goalie, and he had missed too many easy shots tonight to let this opportunity go to waste. He wasn't about to lose to goddamn

Minnesota State. And he *really* wasn't going to let Rozanov hog all the glory and win the game with a fucking hat trick.

Then, suddenly, there was an indescribable pain in his right knee, and for a second all Shane saw was the milky white of the ice, as it rushed up to meet his face faster than it had any right to.

He hit the ground with enough force to knock the wind out of his lungs, and landed awkwardly on his stick, which jabbed right into his gut with a sickening *crunch* sound.

And then, for a few precious moments, he had trouble really making sense of anything at all. He felt his body instinctively curl into a ball, attempting to protect what he realized was surely a broken rib.

"Fuck." He wheezed out, still moving a little as his momentum carried him on the ice, and through the hot-white pain he attempted to open his eyes and glance to the corner, where the puck had left his stick and rolled to a stop. *They still had a chance*.

Except, oddly, there was no one even *near* the puck, and all Shane could make out was noise. Behind him, it sounded like the refs were frantically blowing their whistles at a near constant shriek, and there was yelling. Lots of yelling. Some in English, some in… not English, his hazy mind helpfully supplied. Periodic thuds accentuated the voices.

Pushing through the pain, Shane groaned and tried hard to turn his head to look at what was happening behind him. As his eyes swept over the rest of the ice, the first thing his brain comprehended was the incensed face of Ilya Rozanov.

With his hands in the collar of a Minnesota defenceman who was on the ground… bleeding. Severely. From what looked like the nose and also possibly the brow.

Refs frantically swarmed the scene, trying to pull him off, but soon had more important things to deal with as both benches cleared to join the fray. Shane saw Rozanov raise his fist, visibly bloodied and free of gloves which now lay strewn on the ice beside him, and bring it down. One of the refs just managed to wrap an arm around his shoulder fast enough to change the trajectory from a direct hit to a glancing blow.

Shane realized then that never before in his life had he seen Ilya Rozanov genuinely angry, not like this. The sight was possibly more shocking than the stunning amounts of pain flashing through his nervous system. Not only because it was completely unprecedented, but also because it was *hot*.

Rozanov's usually affable face was twisted with fury, as he looked down upon the player in his grasp with an emotion that could really only be described as *rage.* And Shane, embarrassingly, found himself simultaneously experiencing very high levels of both pain and arousal. It didn't escape his mind that all that anger was because of *him*.

The bloodied defenceman easily cleared 6′5″, one of those big, lumbering enforcers whose position was less about actual skill and more about intimidation factor. Yet Rozanov had him flat on his back like it was nothing.

Jesus, if he could do that to him what could he do to me?

He could almost picture a scene where Rozanov was leaning over him just like that, face filled with just as much intensity but for very different reasons. Shane wondered how easy it would be for Rozanov to pick him up. How little effort would it take to carry him, or hold him against a wall…

Willing those thoughts down, Shane turned his attention to the more pressing issue. The fact that fighting was very much not allowed in the NCAA.

"Jesus Christ, Rozanov." He wheezed, with almost no hope of being heard over the commotion. The crowd was deafening. Eager for blood, it seemed. "Rozanov. Stop."

Through some miracle, Rozanov looked up at him, mouth curled in a snarl and eyes wild with swirling emotions. *Fuck.* Well, that expression was probably going to feature heavily in Shane's fantasies for the next few months.

The pause in swings was just long enough for refs and players alike to pull him off the defenceman, who, while not completely motionless, was definitely going to be taking a few minutes to limp off the ice. And probably a few more to go through concussion protocol.

As the adrenaline of the moment slowly wore off, the pain started coming into clearer focus, and Shane's mind started to fog over a little. He noticed that Rozanov was now quickly skating over to him, and valiantly attempted to pull himself to his knees. It hurt like hell, but fuck if he was gonna just lay there in the fetal position.

Rosanov stopped above him and immediately crouched down to bring his face to eye-level.

"Hollander. Are you okay? What hurts?" His hands, still covered in blood that wasn't his, frantically moved around Shane's shoulders and chest. A little high on pain, he idly wondered if they would stain his jersey. Embarrassingly, he kind of hoped it did. He wouldn't mind having a physical reminder of what he just witnessed.

"Hollander?"

"Ribs. Right knee. Fuck, I think I broke something. Fuck." Getting to his knees had been a poor decision, and he swore viciously a few more times under his breath for good measure.

He couldn't believe it. The goddamn semifinals and now he was going to have to hobble to the bench like an absolute loser and go to the hospital, instead of winning the game like he was supposed to.

"What happened? Couldn't see." His words came out embarrassingly wheezy.

"Stupid fucking slow defenceman. Couldn't catch up to you."

"Slashing?"

"Mm." Rozanov nodded, his lips pressed in a tight line. The blinding rage had *almost* bled from his eyes and now they were mostly creased tight with worry. "Is okay. He'll be even

slower now."

"Why the fuck would you do that, Rozanov. They're gonna eject you, idiot."

Shane had his head down, trying to catch his breath and save up his strength for the inevitable pain that was bound to come when he tried to stand. It meant he didn't notice how long Rozanov paused before answering, or how strange his voice sounded when he finally did.

"I don't care. He deserved it. Would do it again."

Shane laughed, and then immediately regretted it. Fuck, broken ribs sucked.

"The trainer's coming, we're going to stand up, okay? Lean on me, right side." Trying to follow the surprisingly soft spoken instructions as best he could, Shane managed to skate off on his left leg, leaning heavily on Rozanov, who stood steadfast on his right.

He left the rink to applause from the crowd, his teammates sympathetically patting his back, and tried very hard to swallow the frustrated tears that threatened to fall down his cheeks.

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Later that night, laying in a hospital bed, he saw the news that BU had lost the game in overtime, and he couldn't hold the tears back any longer. After Shane Hollander had left the game injured, and Ilya Rozanov had been ejected and suspended for inciting a brawl, it hadn't been a shocking upset for Minnesota State.

Now, they would play for bronze, and with their two top scorers sidelined, it was hard to imagine a scenario where they didn't come fourth. *Fourth*. Shane didn't think he'd forget the sting of this loss for the rest of his life.

The only thing that brought a smile to his face, in the dark, sterile corner he inhabited of Massachusetts General Hospital, was the memory of Ilya Rozanov beating the absolute shit out of that dirty fucking defenceman. It had been totally, utterly stupid beyond all imagination, and had probably cost them the victory at the end of the day, but Shane couldn't deny it had felt good to see. In more ways than one.

Another memory that made his chest tighten, a little faded from the painkillers that had been pumped into him, was the way Rozanov had called out to him on the ice.

Hollander.

Are you okay?

What hurts?

He had sounded worried. Maybe a little frantic, even. Probably a pain-induced hallucination on Shane's part, but the memory brought a small smile to his face all the same.

Maybe not a total asshole, after all.

Soon after the disappointing end to Shane Hollander's first ever NCAA tournament, it was summer holidays.

He had made it through his first year living in the United States, his first year working towards an economics degree he didn't particularly want, and his first year of playing on the same team as Ilya Rozanov. Now, according to Shane's internal clock, time seemed to be moving at a speed similar to molasses. It turned out when you could barely do more than look at a weight room without your mom getting on your ass about *proper rest* and *healing periods*, time was destined to stay still.

He was back in Ottawa, living with his parents in their respectable suburban townhouse for the next two months, and practically wasting away from boredom. Usually he would spend the summer training, playing a little road hockey with his friends, and screwing around with a frisbee at Meach Lake, even if it was a complete zoo when the temperature was anywhere above 15°C. But now, for at least another two or three weeks, he was under strict orders from Yuna Hollander herself not to go near anything even loosely resembling a sport.

So, he mostly read, and watched tv, and read some more, and sat in a stew of spiralling thoughts where he replayed the semifinal game in his mind over and over and over. It was perhaps a little unhealthy.

Today, his parents were both working, and so Shane had the house all to himself to do absolutely nothing. A very similar pattern to every other day of his summer vacation thus far.

Until he got a text that gave him pause.

ROZANOV: What are you doing?

Huh, that was weird. Usually, Rozanov only texted him when he was trying extra hard to piss him off. Things like the updated scoring leaderboard after he had just been overtaken, or a picture of a cat he had found on the street with the caption, "Like you."

Given, even his endlessly smug energy had been slightly dampened following the suspension and abysmal fourth place finish, but still this was weird. They had never really done small talk. Shane considered responding jokingly, not entirely trusting that there wasn't some grand trick about to be pulled on him, but then decided against it.

SHANE: Just reading in my room. My parents have me on medical house arrest :/

ROZANOV: You read, Hollander? What, books about hockey?

Shane looked at the paperback sitting where he had dropped it in his lap to answer the phone. The grinning face of Herb Carnegie in black and white looked back at him from the cover.

SHANE: No. I read lots of things.

ROZANOV: I'm sure. Many boring things.

Shane rolled his eyes, and was about to question the point of starting a conversation just to make fun of someone's hobbies, when a *ping* notified him of another text.

ROZANOV: How are you feeling?

Well, that was even weirder. Shane had assumed anything Rozanov said to him about his injury would be more along the lines of, "Hollander, you can't afford to sit on your ass for six weeks, you know. I am already so much better than you." Genuine concern was not something he had expected.

SHANE: Much better, honestly. If it was my choice I'd be up and practicing already, but you know my parents. They worry too much.

SHANE: Or, I guess you don't know my parents. But, if you didn't know, they worry a lot.

God, that sounded so stupid. Why was Shane thrown off so much about getting something as simple as a "how are you" text from his teammate?

Somewhere deep inside him, an answer screaming to be released (in a voice not dissimilar to Rose's) was shoved unceremoniously back down where he couldn't hear it.

ROZANOV: That is good. You should listen to your parents.

ROZANOV: Although unfortunate that I will be so much better than you next fall when you forget how to skate.

Shane laughed at that. There he was. Something about the return to their routine of casual chirping settled his nervous stomach, and he couldn't help but smile as he responded.

SHANE: You wish. Last time I checked the goal count last season was 41 to 39. Maybe you should take the summer to catch up.

ROZANOV: Was lucky break, as they say. Next year I will win.

SHANE: Lucky break my ass. I won fair and square, we even played the same amount of games!

SHANE: But I do wish I could get back to the rink. I'm so bored these days.

There was a longer than normal pause before Rozanov's response, making Shane wonder if he had said something stupid, or crossed some kind of imaginary line.

ROZANOV: Do you have Skype?

... Huh?

SHANE: Um… yeah? I use it to call my grandparents, sometimes.

ROZANOV: I am bored, too. I will call you.

Okay, what the fuck? Shane immediately felt his heart rate pick up as he stared at the text. Wasn't Rozanov back home in Moscow? He looked at the clock. It had to be nearing 11 pm there. Not that Shane had memorized the time difference or anything. He had just… been checking the other day for completely unrelated reasons.

Almost as soon as he opened the app, the flashing lights on his screen notified Shane of an incoming call, and he nervously held up his phone and pressed the green 'Accept' button. Just like that, an image came to life before him.

The video quality wasn't the best, and the pixelation meant he couldn't really make out anything too detailed. But from what he could see of the background, it looked like Rozanov was in his bedroom. He could just catch sight of some posters stuck to the wall behind his head, corners visible at the edge of the screen. He wondered idly if they were hockey posters, or if Ilya Rozanov had other interests that he knew nothing about.

"Holy fuck, Hollander, you wear glasses?" His voice came through just slightly mismatched from the movement of his lips, and Shane's hands flew to his face. There, they made contact with the thick black frames that he only wore when he read in the solitude of his own home. Damn, he had totally forgotten he was wearing them.

"Oh, sorry, yeah. Reading glasses." He quickly moved to take them off, but Rozanov made a little noise in the back of his throat that stopped him in his tracks.

"No, keep them on. Is very cute." Shane flushed. It had been less than half a month at home, and already his carefully curated defence systems against Ilya Rozanov, honed through exposure therapy, had started failing.

He refused to admit that they had probably never really worked.

"Shut up. They're not." Yet his movements to take them off were halted nonetheless. Eager to change the topic, he continued before Rozanov could respond, "Are you at home?"

"Mm." As if to demonstrate he was telling the truth, Rozanov moved the camera around in a slow 360, letting Shane catch a better peak at his posters. Alex Ovechkin, Sergei Fedorov, and a selection of women lounging on muscle cars in various stages of almost-nudity. He laughed. Exactly what he expected.

"What about you? I want to see your boring room in boring Canada."

"Fuck off." But the words lacked real heat, and he nonetheless got up off his bed and gave Rozanov a short tour. His room wasn't anything special. A couple bookshelves and houseplants crowded around a bed adorned with simple navy sheets.

He hated to admit it, but seeing it through Rozanov's eyes it probably *did* look pretty boring. Sidney Crosby and Daniel Alfredsson posters hung on one wall, and on the other a window looked out onto a calm little cul-de-sac.

“Alfredsson, really?” Of course that’s what he would pick out. “Didn’t know you had a thing for ugly Swedes.”

“Oh my god, I’m a Sens fan, Rozanov, of course I like Alfredsson.”

He could tell even through the pixelation that Rozanov was unimpressed. “I suppose makes sense. Boring team.”

“Oh please. Our ‘07 team was fucking amazing, and you can’t deny that his performance in the finals…”

And just like that, Shane Hollander, despite being 7000 kilometers away, found himself talking face-to-face with Ilya Rozanov late into a humid mid-May afternoon. Modern technology was truly a wonder.

Mostly they talked about hockey, or hockey-adjacent subjects, but sometimes Shane caught glimpses into other aspects of his life that he hadn’t even thought to consider before. It was sort of nice, the feeling of learning things about Rozanov that he hadn't ever really thought to ask about. If he had any siblings (one older brother, but they weren’t close), when he had started playing hockey (six, same as him), what his favourite video game was (NHL 07, because Ovechkin was on the cover). And for the first time in three weeks, Shane realized he wasn’t bored at all.

They bantered back and forth until Shane noticed it starting to get a little dark outside his window. Shit, how long had they been talking?

“Oh my god, Rozanov, it’s gotta be like two in the morning there. You should go to bed.”

“It is vacation, Hollander. I can stay up for however long I want.” But the yawn that he tried to choke off at the end of his sentence significantly weakened his point.

“Now you’re just being contrarian.”

Rozanov tilted his head in the annoying way (*more like endearing*, whispered that Rose-shaped voice) that he always did when a word came up that he didn’t know. “Actually you are right. I am too tired to speak English anymore.”

Shane laughed, but when he really thought about it, he was struck with how hard it must be for Rozanov to always be conversing in his second language. It must get lonely. “Maybe I should learn some Russian this summer. You won’t know what hit you when we show up for training camp in August and I start shit-talking.”

Silence. Fuck, was that a weird thing to say to your rival/teammate/… tentative maybe friend? The pause was made infinitely worse by the fact that the poor video quality obscured exactly what face Rozanov was making on the other side of the screen.

Thankfully, he eventually responded, saving Shane from dying of humiliation over Skype. “Sure. If you want, I will teach you anytime.”

Shane *really* hoped the pixel count went both ways right now, to at least partially conceal the fact that he was blushing. “Haha, cool. Awesome. Anyways, I think my mom’s calling me for dinner. Goodnight!”

And just before he could get his finger to the ‘End Call’ button, a voice came from his phone speakers, soft with drowsiness and maybe something else that he couldn’t quite pin down. “Goodnight, Hollander.”

After his screen went black, Shane calmly placed his phone down onto his sheets, and took a moment to scream into his pillow. How unfair.

It was one thing to maybe, sort of, be a *little* bit attracted to Ilya Rozanov, physically. But to actually *like* him? Shane Hollander was completely fucked.

Chapter End Notes

Big shoutout to my loyal beta Bri. Nothing brings a friendship together quite like proof-reading each other's smut, I suppose <3

I made the executive decision that this universe uses real NHL team names, because typing out "Ottawa Centaurs" caused me physical pain. Alex Ovechkin can rest assured though, he probably won't be making anymore cameos.

Chapter 2 is almost finished, and will be posted sometime next week!

Chapter 2: Won't Somebody Come Take Me Home?

Chapter Notes

She's here!

I hope you guys enjoy the chapter <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shane sat near the front of the team bus, leg bouncing up and down just the slightest as he looked at the leaves starting to turn yellow outside the window. October had already come, meaning league play had started back up again, and Shane's sophomore year had truly begun. And just like last year, his team wasn't just good, they were *great*. He had known it since summer training camp. Every practice, exhibition game, and tournament since then had simply proven it.

Today they had played their first real game of the season, an away game in Vermont, and it hadn't even been a contest. There didn't seem to be any reason to stress yet. So long as they could stay healthy and do what they needed to do, BU would be an unstoppable force all the way until the end of the road in April.

But now it all weighed a little heavier, because this year the sweater with the name HOLLANDER across the back had been freshly adorned with a big, capital C.

It was a pretty rare honour for a sophomore, but with a team-leading 41 goals last season and their former captain's graduation, it had fallen on Shane's shoulders to take up the mantle. Which he did happily, proud to have proven himself trustworthy to his coach and teammates. But that didn't mean he couldn't feel the weight sometimes, bearing down on him. The numb memory of hobbling off the ice and spending the last day of his freshman season in a cold hospital bed wasn't quite ready to leave him just yet.

He'd have to override it this year. He *would* override it. They wouldn't lose again.

On the bright side, he had already made a new memory worth keeping. The moment he got to see the frowning face of Ilya Rozanov when he had been handed a sweater with an unmissable A splashed across the front. God, that had felt good.

They might be… sort of friends now, since they had spent more than one warm summer night talking over the phone, or on Skype, or just texting whenever they felt bored. But that didn't mean there would ever come a day when Shane Hollander didn't rejoice at beating Ilya Rozanov. At anything, frankly, but especially at hockey.

In the moment he had chirped, "Sorry, what was it you said last year? That I was scared to be *second best?* Guess you'll have to work a little harder to make that dream come true."

Rozanov's frown had deepened. “Told you before, it was lucky break. Don’t get too comfortable with your letter, since I will be taking it next year.”

“*Sure*. Though I suppose you shouldn’t have lost to someone with such a *weak backhand* in the first place, right?”

“No, especially not one so small I can only see his helmet when he sits in penalty box.”

“I’m like three inches shorter than you.”

“Eh, four on good day.”

Shane shook his head. He knew Rozanov *really* couldn’t come up with any good comebacks when he resorted to height.

Not that he would ever admit it out loud, but Shane hadn’t actually been confident about who the captain position was going to before it was announced. With the way they both played last year, it could just as easily have been Rozanov.

Shane may be competitive, but he wasn’t blind. Rozanov was, as much as it physically pained him to concede, a great leader, and seemed to have an innate ability to get the team riled up with only a few words. Shane didn’t think he had the same talent, since he tended to lean more towards a positive reinforcement approach. Honestly, if he said half the shit that came out of Rozanov’s mouth someone would probably throw a punch before the end of the first practice. Yet, for some reason when it was coming from him, everyone seemed to just take it as motivation.

In the end, he was sure it had been a total toss-up, but he would never give Rozanov the satisfaction of confessing it. While his digital summer with Rozanov was enough to push his feelings above your standard “base sexual attraction,” he suspected that between them, rivalry would always come first.

Clearly the slight of being designated second-in-command had done a great job of lighting an absolute fire under Rozanov, though, since tonight he had racked up an insane four points on two goals and two assists. For the first game of the season, he was already playing like a man possessed, and Shane knew if he really did want to keep the C on his chest next year he would need to pick up the pace.

He couldn’t help but grin a bit to himself. He expected nothing less. Shane had always been competitive, but for some reason Rozanov always managed to push him just a little bit harder, a bit further. It had been like that since the moment they first locked eyes at the World Prospect Cup, and he thought it probably always would be.

As he was in the process of mentally replaying his own performance that night, their bus finally squealed to a stop at the mid-tier hotel the team was staying at.

They had a double-header lined up this weekend, and so it would be one night of rest and then off to the next challenger. Thus why they were now in the middle of nowhere, because

the University of Maine was in fucking Orono, a city no one on the planet knew existed except the students that went there.

As they unloaded their bags from under the bus, Shane caught a glance at Rozanov, who had moved to grab his own stuff while in mid-conversation with their goalie. He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but since they had come back from holidays something had been just the tiniest bit different about him.

There were some obvious things, of course. Rozanov had been growing his hair out, to the point where it now curled a little over the tops of his ears and down his neck. This meant he had developed a new habit of taking his helmet off during breaks in play and throwing his head back, to get the curls out of his eyes. It was a very distracting habit, and Shane would tell him to just get a fucking haircut if he wasn't so embarrassingly charmed by it. He had also bulked up a bit, not that he really needed to. But if the way he now filled his clothes out was anything to go by, a gym somewhere in Moscow had seen a lot of Ilya Rozanov this summer. Shane was trying not to think about it for too long.

But there was something *else*. It wasn't anything super noticeable, but just enough that Shane kept giving him quick scans to see if he could figure it out. Just then, Rozanov barked out a laugh, and it finally hit him.

"What happened to your teeth?"

As Shane said the words, one of Rozanov's hands moved instinctively to cover his mouth, a strangely insecure gesture for someone famously cocky about all aspects of his appearance.

"What do you mean?"

"They're all… straight. And white. And… there." He moved a little closer, trying to get a peak at the couple of teeth he damn well knew Rozanov didn't have. However, the other center was now stubbornly keeping his lips sealed.

"I go to dentist in Russia. So?" Hell, if Shane didn't know any better he'd think Rozanov looked kind of… *nervous*.

"Oh, you got snap-ons?"

"... Yes."

Shane had seen his fair share of hockey players invest in a pop-in, especially if the teeth they were missing were of the front-and-center variety. For some reason, though, he had never pictured Ilya Rozanov as the type. He had always seemed too arrogant to admit any of his physical features needed improvement.

Or maybe it was just because Shane had always found his particular brand of chipped teeth embarrassingly attractive.

"Huh."

“Oh, Hollander does not approve?” Rozanov’s lips curled up a bit at that, and Shane got another glance at the set of very straight, very white teeth behind them. A perfect smile. Or… should have been.

“No, it’s not like that. I mean, you should do what you want, of course. I just kind of thought-” Shane laughed nervously. Why the fuck was he even saying this out loud? “It’s nothing.”

“Noooo, what is it? Hollander, do not leave me in suspense like this.”

“Well, you know… you’re a hockey player.”

“Wow, your power of observation is astounding.”

“I’m sorry, *astounding*? Did you spend the summer reading a dictionary?”

“You are trying to change subject.”

“Just…” God, he regretted ever bringing the topic up. Rozanov was never going to let this go. “Your teeth are just very *you*, you know?”

Rozanov’s eyes widened at the confession, because *of course they did you sound like a fucking weirdo, Shane*.

“Oh?” Rozanov turned his back to him, and Shane couldn’t really tell what he was doing for a moment. Then, he spun back, with what looked like a white retainer in his hands, and his mouth cracked wide open into a grin. The same smug grin that Shane had seen practically every day for the past year, missing teeth and all. “This better, Hollander?”

Shane’s heartbeat sped up haphazardly. *Fuck*, he was gorgeous.

“I mean-” He was stuttering over a smile, Jesus Christ. What had he been reduced to. “I think you should wear it if you want to, obviously. If it’s your preference. You just- I don’t think you *need* it, I guess.”

“No, because Hollander finds me very handsome like this?”

“Fuck off, I’m just *saying*-”

“That you think I am naturally sexy.”

Shane rolled his eyes. He had walked right into this. “Just, do what you want.”

“Well, I think I want Hollander to keep finding me sexy, so…” Ilya’s eyes flashed with something dangerous, and he couldn’t stop smiling at Shane’s stuttering embarrassment.

Shane bit down on the response that immediately sprung to mind.

It doesn’t matter. I couldn’t stop if I tried.

Thankfully, their coach saved him from having to continue the conversation, as he returned from the hotel's front desk with key cards in his hands.

Shane's designated away-game roommate was usually Hayden Pike, an American kid that he had come to genuinely enjoy the company of since they had been paired up freshman year. However, Hayden hadn't been able to join the team on this trip due to a particularly bad case of the flu, and Shane was rejoicing at the thought of post-game alone time. A rare and glorious treat when they were on the road.

However, his internal celebration was cut miserably short at the sound of his coach barking, "Rozanov! Hollander! Come get your key."

"What? Why am I with Rozanov?"

"You think this school has money for single rooms, Hollander? Or do you think now that you're captain you get special privileges?"

"No, coach, just usually I room with Pike."

"Well, did Pike show up when I wasn't looking? Cause I don't see him."

Shane frowned, but begrudgingly took the key card and hauled his bag back over his shoulder.

"And try not to kill each other, please, boys. I don't want anyone on the IL because of a domestic incident."

With that parting message, Shane trudged to the elevator. He could hear Rozanov humming something happily behind him, and wished he could be equally as blasé about the whole arrangement.

The problem was that a 'domestic incident' was exactly what Shane was afraid of, just not in the way his coach was insinuating. He was long past the era where he could pretend to despise all the bickering and teasing. The issue currently was actually… more the opposite.

Recently he had been having… dreams. Dreams that left him waking up sweaty and spent, with lingering flashes of a certain amber-eyed teammate still seared onto the back of his eyelids. It wasn't a particularly recent development, having Ilya Rozanov show up after his head hit the pillow, but the frequency (and intensity) had definitely been increasing, and if Shane was being very honest with himself it was always worse after they had just played together.

He couldn't help it. Surely there was some scientific explanation for how adrenaline spikes caused arousal, or something.

Also, it didn't help that Rozanov looked particularly good when he played hockey. It was in the way he carried himself on the ice, that attitude of overwhelming confidence in his own abilities, which would be called cockiness if he didn't back it up and *then some*. The way he

so easily got under the other team's skin, and would never fail to skate right past the opposing bench after scoring a goal, amusement dancing in his eyes.

Shane wasn't the only one who thought it was hot. Girls at school had even gone so far as to start literal Rozanov *fan pages*. He knew because Rose had shown him, obviously, not because he was *looking* for them.

Sharing a room with Hayden actually helped, usually, because knowing his friend was sleeping a few feet away did a good job of killing any lingering arousal in Shane's post-game brain. But now, freshly keyed up after a big win (one in which Rozanov had played fucking amazing) and sharing a room with the very man who starred in essentially all of his recent fantasies, Shane was tremendously concerned about the direction his subconscious would turn tonight.

It seemed like Rozanov shared none of his inner turmoil, as he pushed past him into room 403 to casually sling his bag onto the closest bed. "You know, new tally begins today, Hollander. 2 to 1."

Shane rolled his eyes. "Wow, what a lead. How will I *ever* catch up."

"Yeah, but really should be 4 to 1, I think."

"The goals you score in your dreams don't count, Rozanov."

"No, is because my goals were *sexy*. Should count for two. Yours was just tap-in off rebound." He blew a short raspberry, as if the thought of such a boring goal offended him.

"And yet it's all worth the same, asshole."

"Maybe in hockey rules, but not to me."

"Well, you're lucky they didn't score when you were in the box for two minutes. Or did you forget the penalty *I* helped kill for you?"

Rozanov's eyebrow twitched, looking genuinely a little peeved as he remembered that detail. "That was shit call. I barely touched him."

"His face on the ice and your stick in his skates said otherwise."

"Is not my fault their right wing cannot avoid obvious obstacle. And ref is blind as my dead grandmother."

"Oh yeah, you definitely won him over with that explanation."

"Well, he deserved to know he made shit call."

"I'm just saying, maybe you could be a little more thankful to the guy who saved your ass from a -1 on the score card."

“Oh?” Shane really did not like the look that sprung to Rozanov’s eyes. The annoyance disappeared, and his voice went an octave lower as he purred, “And how does Hollander want me to thank him?”

Not wanting to exhibit how flustered he was from such a stupid line, Shane pretended there was something very interesting inside his bag. “Fuck off. I call shower first.”

“We showered at the rink.”

“And I’m showering again.” As quickly as he could without looking insane, Shane escaped into the bathroom. He locked the door behind him and resolutely avoided his own eyes in the mirror. He didn’t particularly want to see what was reflected in them.

After a few minutes of not even washing up, but just standing under a hot stream of water in the shower, trying to will his brain to go somewhere non-sexual, he realized he could hear Rozanov talking in the other room. Clearly there hadn’t been major investments put into the thickness of walls in this hotel.

He must have been speaking on the phone, because Shane couldn’t hear any other voices, and it must have been to someone back home, because he was speaking in Russian.

Well wasn’t that just completely unhelpful for pushing his thoughts in a pure direction.

Rozanov’s voice always dipped a little lower when he spoke in his native language, and certain sounds caught in his throat, guttural in a way Shane was sure he could never accurately imitate. The confident words that Shane couldn’t understand flowed fast and assured, with none of the occasional pauses or uncertainties that popped up when he spoke in English.

Sometimes, during the heat of the moment in a game, Rozanov would revert to Russian to spit something (probably incredibly rude) at the other team, and it always brought a flush to Shane’s cheeks. He just sounded a little extra commanding in his native language, and it made Shane picture… other situations where he wouldn’t mind Rozanov talking to him like that.

Shane wished for a moment he could understand what he was saying, but then thought it was probably bad enough that he was eavesdropping in the shower *without* being able to make out any meaning. And it was probably even worse that he was getting increasingly turned on by what he was hearing. God, that was maybe kind of fucked up, what if he was talking to his dad or something?

It didn’t sound like that, though. He sounded… a little flirty, maybe?

Shane, admittedly, had looked up how to say certain phrases in Russian over the summer break. Not *for* Rozanov, because that would be insane and weird and obsessive, but just to satiate his own curiosity.

Mostly hockey related words, of course, but in a fit of what could only be clinical insanity, his fingers occasionally typed out phrases like “pretty” or “handsome” or “I like you.”

He was no expert, but he could have sworn he just heard “pretty.”

Quickly, he turned the shower handle to the farthest left it would go, letting the stream turn cold. Now that he had first-hand experience of how clearly audio travelled through these particular walls, any hope he had of getting rid of some pent-up tension before bed was mournfully washed down the drain. He would just have to bathe himself in ice and hope for the fucking best.

Maybe he could convince JJ to switch rooms with him. JJ was Canadian, surely he could play to some ‘fellow countryman’ heartstrings and prevail upon him to help out his captain, just for one night. He could explain it away by complaining that they argued too much for him to get a good night's sleep. It would be far from unbelievable, given their track record.

But how would he explain it to Rozanov? It would be obvious he was running away, and Rozanov wouldn’t believe it was actually because of something as stupid as petty annoyance.

He sighed. He was just going to have to suck it up, and hope for a cold, barren night of cold, barren dreams.

In his rush to escape, Shane hadn’t brought a change of clothes with him into the bathroom, so he wrapped one of the hotel towels around his waist and prepared to make a run for his stuff outside.

It wasn’t weird. They changed in front of each other all the time. Of course, those times were in (kind of disgusting) locker rooms filled with 20 something other men at any given point, but this wouldn't be any different.

However, Shane’s trip to his overnight pack was cut abruptly short, because as soon as he opened the bathroom door he almost ran right into Rozanov. Apparently the phone call had ended, because he had put on his sneakers and now seemed to be making his way outside.

Shane saw the pack of cigarettes in his hand, and tried not to roll his eyes.

“Jesus, Rozanov, do you really need to smoke *right now?* We have a game tomorrow, in case you forgot.”

Expecting a snappy comeback about his goody-two-shoes tendencies, Shane was surprised to be met with silence. Looking up with a questioning look, he noticed that Rozanov… wasn’t meeting his eyes.

His gaze had drifted lower, to where Shane’s hand gripped the towel low around his waist.

He saw Rozanov’s own hand tighten around the pack of smokes, causing it to crinkle in a little where his fingers had gone taut. His face was tight and controlled, lacking any trace of the carefree expressions Shane was used to seeing.

Were it not for him standing so close, he would have surely missed the subtle way in which Rozanov’s jaw clenched.

Was he… angry? That didn't seem right. It wasn't like Rozanov of all people had issues with nudity. But no matter what it was, the look in his eyes was definitely intense, and the way his gaze slowly roved over Shane's torso more than a little unhelpful in undoing some of the work the cold shower had done.

Shane shook his head. He worried if he blushed right now it would be visible all the way down his chest, and wouldn't that be embarrassing.

"Just don't let coach see you, please. I don't want to be chewed out for letting my roommate succumb to his nicotine addiction."

"Mm." The word came out as more of a grunt than a verbal response, and before Shane could make sure Rozanov really knew how serious he was being, he had pushed past him and out the door.

What the fuck was that?

Maybe the phone call was more serious than he had thought? Shane shrugged to himself. Whatever, at least this momentary reprieve gave him some time to get ready for bed in peace, and settle his own mind.

Changing into pajamas, a pair of flannel pants and an old t-shirt from some youth hockey camp, he plopped himself down on the remaining unclaimed bed. Rozanov had clearly raked through his bag to get to his cigarettes, because it already looked like a small bomb had gone off on his side of the room. Some of it had even made it to the foot of Shane's bed.

His fingers itched to clean it up, but that would be weird. To tamp down on the urge, and try to lull his mind into some semblance of normalcy, he took out a book from his bag and decided to read a bit before going to sleep. Maybe if he got his train of thought hooked on something else, he could conveniently forget who would inevitably be occupying the bed a mere two feet away.

He popped on his glasses and tried to immerse himself back into the story where he had left off. This one was about baseball (*see, I don't just read hockey books*, he told an imaginary Rozanov) and was proving to be a genuinely interesting look at how data-analysis could be used to make small budget teams competitive at the pro-level. Shane was swiftly sucked back in, and didn't comprehend the time passing until he heard the *click* of a lock open and his roommate return.

He looked up from his book, to see Rozanov frozen just inside the door. His hair was swept around like he had been standing in the wind for a while, and his pale skin had been chill-bitten pink.

Shane's nose crinkled. "God, I can smell you from here." He didn't necessarily mind the tobacco scent, but it was problematic how his brain immediately associated it with Rozanov. He figured falling asleep surrounded by that smell wouldn't bode well for the sanctity of his unconscious thoughts.

“You… really do wear glasses when you read.” His voice was still a little tight. It lacked the teasing edge Shane was used to, and it was throwing him off.

“Obviously. My dad does too, so guess I get it from him.”

Rozanov looked like he was physically struggling to move past the entryway, and his eyes were glued to Shane’s face.

“I- shower now.” Just like that, Rozanov tossed his smokes somewhere in the rough direction of his bag and shut himself in the bathroom.

“Oh… okay.” Whatever. Clearly, he was being avoided. Maybe Rozanov was going through something, and Shane being in his space was making it worse.

Taking off his glasses and turning off the lamp at his bedside, Shane resolved to just go to sleep while Rozanov was in the shower. That would probably be best for both parties.

He let himself drift off listening to the sounds of water softly hitting against tile, allowing exhaustion to wash over him. He hadn’t realized how tired he was, after the game and all the subsequent emotional panic.

He was out in a matter of minutes, with only the faintest whiff of tobacco still lingering in his nose.

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Drifting back into consciousness, Shane couldn’t comprehend much except a hazy feeling of warmth. It emanated from an expanse of bare skin pressed up against his back, and a pair of long legs wrapped around his.

He drowsily perceived a muscular arm wrapped around his waist, and languid, half-asleep kisses being pressed into the nape of his neck. Shane whined a little at the feeling, and pressed himself back into the hot comfort of the body behind him.

“Morning, Hollander.” The voice in his ear, connected to the body entangled with his own, was a very familiar one.

“Rozanov. What time is it?” He turned his head a little, and felt Rozanov press his cheek into Shane’s shoulder, where the neckline of his t-shirt had stretched to reveal bare skin. He groaned a little as the kisses got deeper, teeth and tongue being added with the clear intent to leave bruises.

“Rozanov.” He meant it to come out admonishing, but instead the name escaped his lips in the form of a moan. “We have to get ready.”

“Don’t worry, *kotyonok*, we have time.” Moving across his shoulder, he rolled them over so Shane was on his back and he was now leaning over him, holding himself up effortlessly on his elbows. Shane’s eyes were drawn to the slight strain of muscles in his arms as he leaned over to cover his body with his own. The sun starting to stream in the window gave the impression of a halo, his curls shining a little blonder in the light.

The edge of his comprehension was hazy, as if covered by the slightest layer of morning mist. There was also an irritating thought just nipping to be heard somewhere at the back of his skull, but Shane was too warm and happy to pay it much attention.

“Well, better make the most of it, then.” Fully ignoring anything picking at his brain that distracted from the glorious sight of Ilya Rozanov, shirtless and inches from his face, Shane surged up to capture his lips with his own.

When they made contact, a small grunt was pulled out of Rozanov, who came down to match the kiss with equal fervour. It started almost light, all warm touches and teeth nipping at each other’s lips, playful and flirty. But before long the kisses started deepening, getting longer and messier.

It turned fast into a deep, filthy thing, neither wanting to yield to the other just yet. They were competitive everywhere else in their life, so it only made sense. However, for the first time, Shane thought that this was a battle he didn’t particularly want to win.

Desperate and hungry, Shane tilted his face, trying to angle himself better to meet Rozanov’s lips. He could feel Rozanov's hands fit nicely around his waist, pulling him in closer. Shane felt a whimper slip through his lips, any other time he might have been embarrassed, but he couldn’t be bothered now. Not when Rozanov seemed equally as affected. Groans were coming up freely to his lips, and Shane swallowed them down like a man starved. Every sound was the sweetest dessert he had ever tasted, and he could feel himself quickly getting addicted.

Feeling breathless, Shane pulled away, panting and enjoying the feeling of their breaths mingling. Eyes darting across Rozanov’s face, where he could see the shine of spit on his chin. He didn’t know whose it was, and couldn't find it within himself to care. Rozanov’s lips had been bitten red, and he looked as fucked out as Shane felt.

He had never seen anything hotter.

“You want more, Hollander?” He murmured, voice sounding even deeper than normal. Shane tried to keen his hips upwards, desperately chasing some form of friction to help address the burning in his gut, but Rozanov’s strong hands held him firm.

“Yes.” He gasped, barely recognizing the sound of his own voice.

“Hmm…maybe if you ask nicely.”

Shane whined, a high-pitched, involuntary thing pulled from somewhere deep within him. “*Please*. Please, Rozanov.”

“Oh, I think you can do better than that.” He mocked, grinding down ever so slightly, giving Shane just the barest of relief.

“*A-ah!* God fuck you, Rozanov.”

“Those aren’t the words I’m looking for.”

Shane looked up into the teasing face of Ilya Rozanov. His vision was getting a little blurry, as he could feel his eyes starting to water. He was so turned on he felt almost light-headed. "*Ilya*. Please, I need you to touch me."

A sharp intake of breath above him. And then, a string of almost inaudible Russian was being pressed, dirty and rushed, into his skin. From the tone, it could have been terms of endearment, or just a chain of profanity. Maybe he was calling Shane a slut. He wouldn't have been wrong.

Releasing his grip on Shane's hips, Rozanov started moving down slowly, kissing each part of Shane's body as he went like he was worshipping it.

It was all too much. Too kind, too adoring. Too *loving*. Shane could barely take it, and he found his fingers threading themselves naturally through Rozanov's hair, urging him through gentle tugs to move a little lower, a little faster.

Rozanov, now between his legs, huffed out a laugh, causing Shane to flinch. The puffs of air that hit his inner thighs were so close to where he needed Rozanov most.

"Alright, *kotyonok*," Rozanov said with a kiss on his thigh, "I won't make you wait any longer."

And just as he was finally going to get some kind of relief from the relentless teasing, Shane Hollander woke up.

Greeted harshly by the dingy off-white of a stucco ceiling, and an alarm on his phone beeping incessantly. Sweat had stuck the top sheet to his skin, clingy and gross, and he was embarrassingly hard in his flannel pants. *Jesus Christ.*

As fast as he could through the slight dim of arousal that still clung to his movements, Shane grappled at the nightstand trying to shut off his alarm, and as soon as he managed to silence the sound he whipped his head to the side. Rozanov mumbled a bit, but continued to sleep soundly in the other bed. Thank fuck. There was still hope to escape this relatively unscathed.

However, the fact that Rozanov had apparently gone to bed in nothing but a pair of tight black boxers was really not aiding the case. He was sleeping on his stomach and hugging a pillow to his face, smushing his cheek up like a hamster. It was kind of cute.

Less cute was the fact that the warmth of the hotel room had led him to shuck off the covers during the night, which were now left resting dangerously low on the curve of his ass. Shane was left with the glorious sight of miles of uninterrupted skin and muscle… and none of it was helping.

Fuck, he needed to get out of here.

Trying to go as fast as he could without making too much noise, Shane grabbed enough clothes from the ground next to where he threw his bag to form one complete outfit, and rushed to put them on.

He had made it all the way to the last step of slipping on his sneakers, when he heard noises start to come from the bed where Rozanov was sleeping. Without a second thought, he grabbed a jacket and rushed out the door. Fuck it, he could brush his teeth later.

For a minute, Shane just paced up and down the hallway, trying to will himself into a state of normalcy. Okay, this was okay. It was already 7:30, he could just go down to the hotel breakfast and pretend everything was fine. He had just… gotten up before Rozanov, and left him behind because he was a heavy sleeper and Shane preferred to be early for these things.

Feeling his heart rate slow now that the immediate threat of discovery had passed, Shane took a few deep breaths. The elevator shook slightly with age as it took him down to the first floor, and the slow movements grounded him a little.

By the time he entered the breakfast area (because no self-respecting mid-tier hotel lacked a continental breakfast) he had calmed down enough to plaster what he hoped was a convincing look of tired boredom on his features.

His coach, along with a collection of some of his early-rising teammates, took up about half the tables in one corner of the room. Shane waved at them, and then went to join JJ in the buffet line, where he was currently stacking a plate with enough chocolate chip muffins to feed a small family of four.

"Hey, JJ."

"Captain." JJ's strong French-Canadian accent made it sound more like *capitaine*. "Good sleep?"

Shane tried to keep what he hoped was a decent poker face. "Eh, mattress was a little hard, but could be worse."

"Yeah, the beds in these places are always so fucking bad." Looking up from the carbohydrate balancing act happening on his plate, JJ paused for a moment, gaze lingering somewhere near Shane's shoulder, and then his eyes widened.

"What?"

"Uh, captain…" One of JJ's eyebrows raised, and his lips curled up in a grin that he couldn't seem to contain.

"*What?*" Shane was now a little concerned. Was there something obvious happening on his face that screamed *I just had a wet dream about Ilya Rozanov?* "Do I have bed-head or something?"

JJ's grin only widened. "Yeah, that's it." He reached out and ruffled Shane's hair a bit. "Come join us when you've got food. The team will be happy to see our best players have been bonding."

What the fuck was that about?

Shaking off a sense of impending doom, Shane got to work building his breakfast. He always tried to play it safe in places like this, sticking to some fruit and the healthiest looking wholegrain bread he could find.

Making his way back to the table with the rest of his teammates, he noticed they had all formed a huddle, but whatever important conversation they were whispering about was suddenly halted at his arrival.

“Morning, captain.” Came a chorus of voices, along with some poorly stifled snickering.

Shane looked around at the unconcealed amusement on most of the faces around him. “Does someone want to tell me what the fuck is so funny?”

“Well-” One of the freshmen started, and was immediately shushed by JJ.

“No, please, he hasn’t realized yet. Don’t spoil the fun.” Shane was sure JJ hadn’t stopped smiling since the buffet. His cheeks must hurt at this point.

“God, you’re all so fucking weird.”

Trying his best to ignore whatever all his teammates apparently found hilarious, Shane started eating his breakfast, and before long the conversation turned back to normal.

They had gotten around to talking about the UMaine roster, analyzing which players they’d have to pay special attention to, when Shane heard a loud clatter behind him.

Turning to the noise, he caught sight of Rozanov, standing stiff just inside the doorway. Shane watched as one of the glasses meant for orange juice, thankfully plastic, bounced around a few times on the linoleum, clearly having been knocked over by a still-halted Rozanov.

The cup slowly rolled to a stop, but he stood there a beat longer, eyes fixed directly at Shane. Shane swore he saw something flash in his eyes, an intense emotion that he didn’t know how to read. But before he could examine further, Rozanov snapped out of whatever stupor he was in and turned away.

“Sorry. I am very clumsy.” He flashed a smile at the hotel staff who had come to help him, and moved into the buffet area.

Now the rest of the table was *really* snickering.

Shane turned back around to look at his teammates, ready to use physical force if necessary to get them to fucking spill it, when the movement made him catch something in his periphery. He paused.

On the left sleeve of his team jacket, on which should have been a very familiar 24, was plastered the number 81.

He didn’t need to look at the other side to know there would be an A, instead of a C, and he didn’t need to take the whole thing off to know whose name would be printed in big, block

letters across the back.

Dear Lord. In his rush to escape the hotel room, he must have grabbed Rozanov's jacket. Being a little fixated on other recent events, and not in the clearest mental state, he hadn't even noticed that it fit a little bigger than normal.

"And he finally notices!" JJ laughed joyously as he watched Shane's face go through what must have been the five stages of grief in rapid succession.

"Fuck, must have *really* not slept well." Shane tried his best to laugh off the mistake, joining in the good-natured ribbing of his teammates, while doing his best to ignore every instinct inside of him that wanted to die just a little.

Rozanov, meanwhile, had clearly collected himself from whatever *that* initial reaction had been. By the time he pulled up a chair to their table, the familiar look of self-satisfaction was back on his handsome features.

"Downgrading yourself already, Hollander? I will not say no to wearing the C, today."

"Oh fuck off. I was tired this morning."

Rozanov pinched at the excess fabric around Shane's arms. "Maybe this is sign for you. Weight room is calling."

Shane wasn't a religious man, but he prayed at that moment for the ground to open up and swallow him. He also didn't really have a good comeback for that, so he just repeated, "Fuck off."

He moved to pull the jacket off his shoulders, shivering a little as the air hit his bare arms. He hadn't thought to put a hoodie on under, but being a little chilly in a t-shirt was a better option than putting up with *this*.

"Is fine." Rozanov's hand shot out and pulled the jacket back over Shane's shoulder. Shane froze at the contact. He swore that he could practically feel the warmth of Rozanov's hand through the fabric. Embarrassingly, even just that subtle touch was enough to remind him of the image he had woken up to this morning.

"No, I'll just run up and grab mine."

"I said is *fine*, Hollander. We will change before we leave the hotel."

Even if that was true, it was still mortifying on a multitude of levels to sit here and eat breakfast with ROZANOV branded across his back in front of the whole team. But, hey, if Rozanov wasn't going to make it weird, then Shane would try his best not to, either.

JJ spoke up again, "Don't trust him Captain, he's just trying to steal your jersey."

"I don't have to steal. Will be mine soon, anyways."

A chorus of *oohs* from the table. Shane rolled his eyes. "In your dreams, Rozanov."

“Hey, shouldn’t I be ‘Hollander’ now? Or are we both Rozanov?”

It was a ridiculous thing to say, but the team laughed along, apparently finding great delight in the image of their two rival leaders joining in marital union. Due to obvious and unavoidable circumstances, Shane was unable to find it so funny.

“Are you saying Hollander would take your name, Roz?” Shane seriously needed JJ to shut the fuck up.

“Clearly.”

“Like fuck I would.” As much as he didn’t want to be a part of this conversation, he wasn’t about to let his good name be dragged through the mud.

Rozanov raised an eyebrow, and pretended to think about it. “Well, maybe not. Maybe it is for Canadian citizenship, so I take your name.”

Shane almost choked on the slice of apple that he had unfortunately just taken a bite of. It didn’t actually work like that, but that didn’t mean the image hadn’t done things to him all the same.

Thankfully, he was saved from having to respond by JJ’s dramatic gasp. He placed an offended hand on his chest. “You would marry Hollander for citizenship before me, Roz? I’m hurt.”

Rozanov laughed, “Of course, you are French. My ancestors would not forgive me. Plus, Hollander is cuter. He’d make a good bride.”

JJ gasped even louder at that.

“You’re all idiots.” Shane had decided that actually the rest of his toast wasn’t worth the damage this was doing to his psyche. He quickly got up (returning his tray first, he hadn’t lost his manners) and walked as fast as he could manage back to the elevator.

Of course it was easy for Rozanov to joke about these kinds of things. It was probably because Rozanov wasn’t gay (Rose be damned) and so none of it was concrete. He could grin and laugh and banter about all the gay relationships in the fucking world, and didn’t have to worry about any of it ever actually coming back around to hurt him. Unfortunately, to Shane, it was all a little *too* real.

While waiting for the elevator, suddenly the jacket felt like it was burning all the places where it made contact with his skin, and he couldn’t get it off fast enough. He crumpled it in his hands, and then immediately felt bad for treating a piece of their uniform like that and smoothed it back out. He stared for a moment at the name across the back, and the name returned his stare, almost mockingly.

As if, it seemed to be saying to him. *Only in your dreams.*

He tried to stop breathing so fast, worried he might be hyperventilating. He needed to focus. They had a game today and he had a team to lead. At this rate he wouldn't be able to get two

feet on the ice without winding up flat on his ass.

He couldn't fuck up the responsibility he had been given because he was having a… what, a gay panic attack? Not very captain-esque behavior.

It would just have to be put in a compartment of his brain to be opened another day.

By early December, Shane had to give himself due congratulations for his compartmentalization.

Did he still have what could only be described as a big fat fucking crush on Ilya Rozanov? Yes. Had he managed to valiantly ignore it when necessary in order to play very good hockey? Also yes. In fact, in his own humble opinion, he had become rather a master at the balancing of those very two things.

In preparation for finals and winter holidays, there were no more games scheduled until January. Shane figured this could provide some well needed time to branch out from both obsessions, but was currently finding it a very difficult task. He had always had a bit of a one-track mind.

Early December also meant that it had circled back around to Rose's birthday, which meant she was about to try her best to convince him parties were actually *fun* and he should *totally* come to one.

"It's my birthday, Shane, and you are my best friend. So yes, I will be extremely disappointed if you are not there," Came her disappointed tone from the other end of the line.

He was holding his phone up to one ear while the other hand played absentmindedly with a loose thread on his bedsheets. "Won't there be a ton of people, though?"

"Not a *ton*. It'll just be some friends from classes, and clubs and stuff."

"Okay, so knowing you that means, what, a hundred?"

"Oh my god Shane, just come."

"But won't it be weird that I don't really drink? I've been called boring before." Rozanov's face flashed unbidden to his mind, and the particular way that word dragged in his accent.

"Not at all, I'll have soda and stuff. You're not the only one who prefers to stay sober at these things."

"... Okay."

"Really?"

“Yeah, I’ll come, if you really want.”

Shane heard the faint sound of clapping on the other end. She must have him on speaker while getting ready. “Yay! Oh my god, I’m the one who finally got Shane Hollander to come to a party. I’m gonna be a campus legend.”

He groaned, already kind of regretting his decision. “Call it part of your birthday present.”

“No shot. I’m expecting something amazing from you, future millionaire.” She laughed, and Shane couldn’t regret his decision too much. He liked making Rose happy.

“The key word in that sentence is *future*.”

“Sure, sure. Oh, also, you should wear those jeans we bought together. They make your ass look unbelievable.”

“The dark wash ones?”

“And he even remembers the term!” Shane smiled. Rose had made it somewhat of a mission since the beginning of their sophomore year to educate him about fashion. Out of sheer convenience most of the stuff he wore tended to lean into the comfortable, athletic side of the spectrum, but he wasn’t adverse to trying a little harder outside of the rink.

It was definitely a journey Shane was undertaking out of a personal drive to better himself, and totally didn't have anything to do with trying to look good in front of a certain Russian teammate.

“For a top, just please no team hoodies or ratty t-shirts. I beg.”

Shane frowned. Even he wasn’t clueless enough to show up to Rose’s place in hockey merch. Anymore. “What about a sweater? Does Her Majesty accept that?”

“If it’s that white sweater you wore to dinner last week, Her Majesty wholeheartedly endorses the decision.”

“Alright. I’ll be there at 9, then? Unless you want help earlier to set up?”

“No, that’s fine, my roommates will do the dirty work. All you have to worry your pretty little head about is actually being here.”

“Okay, see you soon, then.”

After they had said their goodbyes, Shane got to work assembling the pre-approved outfit. The jeans really did fit well, and the sweater was of a soft, thin material that clung to his arms nicely without being too tight.

He wondered idly if he should wear jewelry, or if that was too much. Rose had told him that it wasn’t only gay men that accessorized these days, and no one was going to out him off of some rings or a bracelet, but it still felt like a step outside of his comfort zone.

Maybe just a necklace. He had bought a nice one on a shopping trip with Rose ages ago, a silver chain with a simple metal bear pendant at the bottom. He put it on, and finished everything off with a belt, boots, and jacket, all simple and black.

Shane looked at himself in the mirror. *Okay.* Even he could admit that he looked pretty damn good. Maybe tonight would be fine, if he could socialize acceptably with all of Rose's cool, outgoing actor friends.

During the wait until 9 o'clock, though, that initial burst of confidence seemed to slowly drain out of him. He couldn't help but think about how he wasn't really going to know anybody there except Rose. All her friends would probably think he was boring, and he would probably say something stupid and then spend the rest of the week thinking about it.

There was a reason he spent most Friday nights at the gym.

By the time he finished the long, chilly walk over to Rose's apartment, and was standing outside of the front door, it was really closer to 10. He had almost convinced himself by that point it wasn't worth it, but he tried to steel his nerve. Shane Hollander was not about to abandon his friend on her birthday.

He could hear loud music and voices coming from inside, and wondered if knocking would be weird. What was the etiquette of these things?

Before he could make up his mind, the door burst open on its own, and a small group of girls almost ran into him trying to leave. They pulled back, giggling and already looking more than a little unsteady on their feet.

"Oh my god, sorry!" One of the girls apologized, "We're just going down to smoke. You heading in?" She held the door open, so Shane could see the absolute mania inside the apartment. He estimated that his guess of a hundred people hadn't really been that much of a hyperbole.

"Oh yeah, thanks."

The one who had spoken then really took a look at him. "Oh, you're Rose's friend Shane, right?"

"Yeah, that's me."

Her eyes lit up a little, "So nice to meet you! She talks about you *so* much, we all thought you were her boyfriend for a while." The way she was looking at him, Shane couldn't tell what the right response to that comment was supposed to be.

"Oh, no. We're just good friends."

"So… you're single?"

Another question that Shane didn't particularly feel like answering. "... Yes."

“Cool.” There was some kind of eye contact exchanged between the girls that Shane couldn’t decipher, and then they stumbled past him. “Alright, smoke break! Enjoy the party, Shane.”

“Thanks.” And with one final, steadying breath, he entered the apartment.

Rose’s place was really nice. She shared it with three roommates, so it was way bigger than any other student apartment he had been in, and had a beautiful view looking out onto the Charles River. But right now, that wasn’t exactly what his eyes were drawn to.

The living room had been cleared out to form a sort of makeshift dance floor, and the kitchen was already a disaster of drinks and snacks that Shane’s clean freak tendencies shuddered to observe. He looked warily at the mass of students in front of him, some dancing, some drinking, some talking in established groups.

Okay, now what?

Thankfully, Rose could seemingly sense a distressed Shane Hollander like a shark when blood hit the water, because she popped up in front of him with a big smile. She wore a shimmery silver dress and had sparkles on her face that glittered in the low lights like a disco ball.

“Oh my god, you actually came! Thanks for not chickening out.” She had to speak loudly to be heard over the music, and leaned in to give him a tight hug.

“Of course. Happy birthday, Rose.”

“Leave your coat wherever you want, it’s kind of a free-for-all.” He did as he was told, and then Rose took him by the hand and dragged him into the kitchen.

“If you don’t want to drink, no worries, there’s lots of stuff in here.” She held out a can to him. “Ginger ale?”

A warm feeling of appreciation washed over him at that moment. He didn’t know what he had done to deserve a friend like this.

But as he was about to take the offered drink, his attention was dragged out into the living room, as a familiar head of light brown curls caught in his periphery.

Please let it not be him.

Warily leaning forward to get a better look, Shane saw, right in the middle of the makeshift dancefloor, Ilya Rozanov. He was wearing a black shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and a v-neck that swooped absurdly low on his chest. It should have looked stupid, and infuriatingly did not. The gold crucifix Shane had never seen him take off shone starkly against his skin, which gleaned with a sheen of sweat.

He looked… *really* good, actually. The girl he was having fun dancing with clearly thought so too, if the position of her hands around his waist was anything to go by.

“Um, Rose?” He choked out, trying with great difficulty to drag his eyes away from where they were lingering suspiciously at hip-level. Jesus, he had been told (by Rozanov, of course, who was never one for false modesty) that he was a good dancer, but seeing it was different. “Why is Rozanov here?”

Rose gave him a look like he was stupid. “Well, I assume because I invited him.”

“And why would you do that?”

The look only got worse. Maybe he really was stupid. “Because you’re my friend, and he’s your teammate, and he likes parties.” She leaned in close to whisper directly into his ear, “And because you need to get your head out of your ass.”

“*Rose*.” Great, now not only were her cool friends going to know Shane was terrible at social gatherings, but so was Rozanov. He couldn’t imagine the teasing coming his way.

“What? Shouldn’t you be happy to see a familiar face?”

He looked back out onto the dance floor, and immediately realized it was a mistake when his eyes locked directly with Rozanov’s. He hadn’t stopped dancing with the woman in his arms, but was, for some reason, now staring directly at Shane. For a tense moment they both just looked at each other, and then Rozanov slowly smiled. Like he was finding great enjoyment in the fact he had caught Shane looking at him.

He leaned down, not breaking eye contact, and whispered something in his partner’s ear. She giggled, and pressed in a little closer.

Shane was going to throw up.

He turned back to Rose, cutting off the tension. “... I think I might need something stronger, actually.”

Her grin widened a little like she had maybe seen this coming, and she quickly pivoted to ladle out… something into a red solo cup. “Of course. Remember Shane, I invited you tonight not because I enjoy torturing you, but because I want to see you have *fun*. It’s not illegal to enjoy yourself a little.”

The reminder felt like it was intended to reference something other than just the alcohol, but Shane didn’t feel like parsing out her double-meanings at the moment.

He took a long, considerable swig of whatever had been put into his solo cup, and tried really hard not to gag. “Oh my god, what is in this?”

“Something stronger.” Rose winked, and picked up his hand again to drag him in another direction. “Now let me introduce you to some of my friends from class.”

Well, fuck it. He might as well make the best of it.

--

Before long, Shane was on his fifth cup of "something" and standing in a group composed of people that Rose had introduced to him earlier. Some of them were the same girls he had run into at the entrance. They had told him… names. He was sure. He was less sure he could come up with them, but he definitely knew they *had* them.

Whatever Rose had given him, drinking it had absolutely been the correct decision. He felt good. Muscles loose, and less anxious about being around a bunch of people he had never met. Hell, he had been making jokes, and people were *laughing* at them. It was a Christmas miracle.

He had even almost forgotten that Ilya Rozanov was present, although he couldn't stop his gaze from unconsciously searching for a black shirt and golden curls in the crowd every now and again.

"You keep looking at the dance floor." One of the girls (Katie? Kyla?) poked him in the side. She was wearing a very bright yellow shirt, and it acted like a beacon for Shane's waning focus. "Wanna dance?"

Some rational part of Shane (deep-buried with the rest of his sobriety) balked at the concept of dancing in public. The tipsy part of Shane (now leaning far closer to actually just drunk) thought it was a phenomenal idea.

"Sure. Let's dance." So, he let maybe-Kelsey lead him into the living room, and started swaying in his best imitation of what he had witnessed other people doing. Unfortunately, the ability to coordinate all four limbs wasn't as easy as he remembered it being, so he stumbled a bit more than intended.

His dance partner giggled, not unkindly, and pulled his hands around her waist so they were back-to-front. She leaned backwards into his chest to speak into his ear. "You don't do this sort of thing very often, huh?"

He couldn't help but think that was a little bit of a dig, but was too drunk to really care. He laughed, words slurring a little, "No, not really."

So they danced, rather poorly thanks to Shane's dwindling hand-eye coordination, but it was still a dance. If he closed his eyes and breathed in deeply, he could even pretend she was someone else, someone that he *really* wanted to be dancing with. She smelt of the same tobacco.

"What made you come out tonight?" The high-pitched voice broke the pretend fantasy his mind had conjured.

"Well, I've been given orders by the birthday girl to try and have some fun."

At that, she reached a hand around to press his chest right up against her back, and moved her lips close enough that he could actually feel them graze his ear. "Well, then let's have fun."

Maybe this actually hadn't been a great decision. Even in Shane's muddled mind he realized that this was rapidly approaching dangerous territory, and he started wondering how he was

going to extract himself from this situation without giving anything away.

Thankfully, he didn't have to consider it for very long.

As the gears in his mind were turning, he felt a hand on his shoulder, gripping a little too strongly to be comfortable. The hand pulled him from his dance partner's embrace, and his back hit someone's chest with a little *oof*. It was a very tall, very broad chest.

"So sorry. I am going to steal my teammate for little bit."

And even four and a half cups of mystery punch in, Shane would recognize that accent anywhere.

He glanced up and saw, at incredible closeness for the first time tonight, Ilya Rozanov. He looked even better from this distance, and Shane really couldn't think straight enough to stop himself from saying exactly what he had wanted to for so long.

"Ilya." He giggled a little at the way it sounded coming out of his mouth. *Why didn't he call him that all the time?*

There was a slight pause, before, "Hollander, you are *really* drunk."

Shane pouted. That wasn't the response he was hoping for.

"Am not." The slight slur to his words wasn't helping his point, though. "And you *know*-" He turned around in Ilya's grip so he could use one finger to stab at him accusatorially, punctuating the rest of his sentence, "I wish you would just call me Shane."

He realized in a far-off way that his finger was now pressing against the chest on display from Rozanov's stupid v-neck. He couldn't remove his eyes from where their bare skin was pressed together.

"I did *not* know that." Came the reply, maybe a little breathless.

"Um, *hello*?" An offending voice came from behind them, where maybe-Kristin was still standing in the middle of the dance floor. She was, rather naturally, looking miffed at this turn of events. "We were dancing, dickhead."

Ilya (because the dam was broken and now he couldn't stop thinking of him as that) moved his hand from Shane's shoulder to his waist. "Sorry, hockey team tradition. Must dance with captain when he comes to party."

"What?"

"Is time-honoured tradition. Cannot break, or we will lose all the games." Shane suspected from the way Ilya's sentences were short and a little broken that maybe he wasn't entirely sober, either.

Shane laughed a little, and crossed his arms loosely around Ilya's neck. "Sorry. I guess I have to dance with this dickhead, now," The insult managed to sound like a term of

endearment on his lips. “You know, super- superst-” His lips wouldn’t form around the word. “The curse thing.”

Maybe-Kate just shook her head a little unbelievingly. “Alright, some other time, then, Shane.” And she moved out of his line of sight.

Sighing a little with the relief of successfully avoiding that situation, Shane tried to stop a smile from where it wanted to break through onto his face. He turned back around to face Ilya. “I think what you just did was probably very rude.”

“I’m sorry.” He didn't sound sorry. “Did you want to keep dancing with her?”

“No. So I forgive you.” Shane giggled softly again, and found it suddenly impossible to stop his lips from continuing to form words. He whispered, like it was a secret, “I’ve actually been wanting to dance with you, you know.”

Ilya’s eyes widened. *Wait, maybe that was a secret?*

But Shane felt proud of himself for having inspired such an expression. Nothing seemed more important right now than pulling reactions like that out of his teammate. He was tired of always being the one getting teased.

“Is that so? Then why wouldn’t *Shane* just ask me?” Back on the offensive, Ilya dragged out his first name a little too long, and Shane couldn’t help but shiver a little. He hoped he couldn’t feel it from the parts where they were pressed together.

“Thought- thought you would have girls to dance with. Like earlier.”

“Do you see me with any girls right now?” He was definitely breathless this time.

“No… So *Ilya*, do you wanna dance with me?” Throwing the same drawn out tone back at him, the question was spoken almost inaudibly into Ilya’s chest. This was such a bad idea. But Shane really couldn't be bothered to remember why.

“Of course, *Shane*.”

“Okay now you’re just being obnoxious.” Still, he let himself easily be pulled into a position that wasn’t dissimilar to where he had just been. Except now, his back was pressed to Ilya’s front, and his head was leaning a little on his shoulder.

Looking up at him from this position, he really was something else. Rozanov had clearly run a hand through his hair to get it out of his face, and it had ended up going in all different directions. Which should have looked ridiculous, but instead made Shane think of all the things he’d do to get a hand in that hair and *pull*.

Not one to deny himself anything in the state he was in, he brought one of his hands up and wrapped it lightly around Ilya’s nape, feeling the way his curls danced along his pointer finger.

His pale skin was glowing, just like it always did when he played hockey, but now he was also thoroughly flushed from alcohol, moles standing out bright and tempting. Shane wanted to count every single one of them with his mouth. He didn't just look gorgeous. He looked *sinful*.

And this beautiful man was dancing *with him*, body movements made loose and fluid from liquid courage.

He felt Ilya sneak one of his arms out from where it was wrapped around Shane's waist and grab a hold of his chin. His head was forced over a little so Shane had no choice but to make eye contact, which from this distance made his heart beat a little erratically. He felt a thumb graze slowly back and forth, just barely caressing the curve of his bottom lip.

"Are you having fun?"

"Mhm. Rose throws a good party." When he opened his mouth to speak, he could feel the calloused pad of Rozanov's thumb move against his lip. It was giving him dangerous thoughts. Like how if he just moved forward a little he could draw the digit into his mouth.

"Yes, a *very* good party." The response was practically purred. Ilya's eyes were blown wide and pupils dilated, probably from the low light and alcohol but Shane kind of hoped it was because of something else. He figured he was probably in no better state.

"Even though she invites some real assholes."

"Oh, yes. That girl was very rude, no?"

Shane laughed. "Not who I was referring to."

He wanted so, so badly to do something dumb like close the distance between them, in front of everyone here. *Why hadn't he wanted to do that earlier?*

Instead, he asked, "Did you know you are dressed very stupid?" He looked conspicuously down the front of Ilya's shirt. *It was right there.* "Does this even count as clothing anymore?"

"We are at party." He laughed softly, a sound Shane hadn't thought him capable of making before tonight, and now a sound he never wanted to stop hearing. "I wear party clothes. Unlike you, who is dressed like professor on night off."

"Hey! Rose picked out this outfit."

"Oh, well if *Rose* picked it, then it must be *perfect*."

Shane didn't have enough of a right mind to detect the hint of jealousy in his voice, so he just smiled and answered honestly, "Yes."

Meanwhile, Ilya's hand had drifted from his chin to the silver chain around his neck, thumbing gently at the bear pendant as he continued talking, "Did Rose also pick this?"

"Nope." He popped the 'p' a little aggressively. "I just like it."

“Why do you like it?”

This felt like a trick question. Shane was in no state for riddles. “Just- because I like it. I like bears.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“You know bear is symbol for Russia?”

Some distant part of sober-Shane knew this. Had he really picked out the necklace because it had reminded him subconsciously of Rozanov? Maybe. Probably.

“No. I just think they’re cute.” He was a bad liar sober, and apparently that skill did not increase with alcohol consumption.

“Mm, suuure.” The puffs of air hitting Shane’s neck as Ilya laughed told him he didn’t believe him. And why should he, when Shane had likely done a terrible job of hiding how much he enjoyed the idea of wearing something that branded him as *Ilya’s*.

Suddenly, he really didn’t understand why he was trying to hide anything at all.

Leaning upwards, Shane decided to take a page out of the playbook used against him tonight. Curling his fingers into Ilya’s hair he gently tugged the man down , letting his lips graze the shell of his ear. This close he could almost taste the salt that clung to his sweat-sheened skin. It was borderline intoxicating, and he wanted to taste more. “I really want to kiss you.”

Shane felt Ilya tense, the hand still on his waist squeezing tighter. “Shane, you are drunk.”

The sound that left his lips was *not* a whine, but maybe something close. “Not really.”

“Yes, really. You don’t know what you are asking for.”

Shane thought it might be easier if he didn’t have to take full responsibility for whatever was going to happen tonight. But he was also vaguely aware that that hadn’t actually been a *no*.

“But you want to?”

He felt a breath shudder over the back of his neck, and something muttered in a language he didn’t understand.

“*Hey*, no fair. I don’t know that one yet.”

Even after switching back to English, there was a guttural quality to Rozanov’s response, his accent a little thicker than normal. “You are more dense than I thought if you have to ask that question, Hollander.”

But before Shane could get out a follow-up question about what the hell *that* meant, a wave of nausea came over him, fast and strong. The room was suddenly spinning, almost enough to

take his feet out from under him.

Turns out the combination of mystery punch, dancing, and all the blood in your body rushing south wasn't great for stability.

"Oh, fuck." Another wave of dizziness hit him, more forceful, and this time Shane really did lose his footing.

The expected pain of hitting the floor never came, though.

He could vaguely make out someone saying his name, and strong hands gripping his waist, but right now all his energy needed to be dedicated towards not throwing up or passing out in the middle of Rose's apartment.

He felt a tug on his hand, and then before he could consciously follow, he was stumbling into the nearest empty bathroom. Which was good, because he was quickly beginning to realize that his fight with gravity was not a winning one.

Then, it all got a little too blurry for him to really keep up anymore.

--

Shane woke up with a headache that felt like someone was slowly twisting a screwdriver through his temple, while their friend hammered a collection of nails into the back of his skull. Immediately, he was reminded of one of the many reasons why he didn't drink.

Blearily, he blinked his eyes open, which felt crusty and gross, and winced at the light seeping through his shitty dorm blinds. He wished he could banish the sun from entering his eyesight for the next 24 hours. Even worse, the taste in his mouth was kind of making him feel sick, and his throat was parched as if he hadn't drank water in days.

How Shane had gotten home was sort of a mystery to him. Maybe Rose had been with him, but maybe he had been alone? Had he taken an Uber? It was at least a 20 minute walk to Rose's apartment, there was no way he had managed that in last night's state.

He tried hard to replay the night chronologically, but after drink number five, it was like trying to find fragments of reality through a funhouse mirror. He was pretty sure, though, that he had thrown up in Rose's bathroom. Shit, he wished the alcohol had taken *that* memory from him, he was going to have to apologize for weeks about her shower rug.

Through the mist of his hangover, he could only really remember how awful he had felt. Although, in the bathroom, there had definitely been a hand on his back at one point, rubbing little circles in his shoulders. That had been soothing. The person had been leaning over him, and Shane had been mesmerized by the slow swaying of a gold crucifix.

Oh my god. Rozanov.

Suddenly, everything before the terrible end to Shane's night flashed back to him in startling, painful clarity.

He had danced with Rozanov.

He had asked Rozanov to kiss him. He had asked Ilya fucking Rozanov to kiss him.

Good lord… the things he had said. The things he had *admitted* to. Shane groaned and shoved his face back into his pillow. It would have been easier to face his poor decisions in the light of day if he didn't remember what those decisions had been.

But… he didn't say no, came a strange, hopeful voice from somewhere within him.

Shane slowly brought his face back up from where he had been adamantly attempting to self-asphyxiate.

That was true. Rozanov had been the one to approach him, to *initiate* a dance. He had… flirted with him, and as many embarrassing things as Shane had admitted to, he hadn't seemed to respond poorly to any of them. By some miracle he had seemed… *into it*, actually.

He went to grab his phone from where it had been left on his nightstand, frowning at the pain the movement brought to his skull. He noticed a couple Advil had been laid out next to his phone, along with a glass of water.

What the fuck?

The pounding behind his ears was making it a little hard to think, but all Shane knew was that he needed to see Rozanov. Now.

He sent a quick reply to the flurry of messages in his inbox from Rose, not wanting her to worry. They were mostly from last night, making sure he had gotten home alright, and a couple of apologies. She clearly felt a little bad about her part in the whole "Shane getting drunk off his ass" thing.

Shane assured her that he was alright, and also an adult capable of making very stupid choices all on his own.

Then, he opened his conversation with Rozanov. Nothing new. Okay. He could do this.

SHANE: Meet me at the rink in 30.

Extra: The Hotel Phone Call (Ilya's POV)

For Ilya, it always felt good to speak Russian, like coming back to a familiar home after a long vacation.

The words came easier, and he didn't have to constantly think about if what he was saying matched up with what he *meant* to be saying. Or if the way his accent clumsily formed around the foreign words made him sound stupid.

He also didn't have to worry about the man in the shower one wall away overhearing exactly what he was about to confess.

"You don't get it, Svetlana, he said he liked my teeth."

"Like, your new ones? Well yeah, wasn't that the whole point of the dentist?"

"No, like… he said I didn't *need* the new ones."

"Oh my god." He could hear faint laughter from the other side of the line. It was a little insulting. "Oh my god, Ilya. He even likes your fucked up teeth?"

"*Svetlana*."

"No, no, this really is true love. You need to marry him."

Ilya groaned. He had thought that talking to a friend would help his situation. He should have known Svetlana wasn't the type of friend to concern herself with being helpful.

"Do you not understand the situation I'm in right now?"

"Yes, yes, I get it. You're sharing a room with the man whose bones you've wanted to jump for years."

"Yes. And he's fucking giving me compliments, and *smiling*."

"What a travesty. How shall you ever survive."

"I'm fucking serious. How am I expected to just lay down and go to bed when he's saying shit like that?"

"Then why don't you just make a move? My god, if I didn't know from personal experience I'd say you sound like a virgin."

“Because he’s just like that, Svetlana. He’s polite, and says shit like that to everyone. He’s fucking Canadian.”

“Sure, of course. He definitely compliments all the boys on the hockey team about their missing incisors.”

Ilya ran a hand through his hair. Fuck, he needed a cigarette. “And now he’s in the shower. He’s going to come out half-dressed and pretty and I’m going to die.”

“Well, I’ll make sure to wear something sexy to the funeral. Or, you could stop being a pussy and I can wear it to your wedding, instead.”

“You are really not helping.”

“Probably because you don’t *really* have a problem.”

“Goodnight. I’m going for a smoke.”

“I look forward to a Maid of Honour position in the near future. Or wait, do gay weddings have one of those?”

“*Goodnight*.”

He hung up the phone before she could get another comment in, and flopped back onto the hotel mattress. It was hard, and dug awkwardly into his back. Staring up at the ceiling, its dreary stucco unfortunately had no answers to reveal concerning his plight.

He got up to grab the pack of cigarettes he kept carefully hidden away in the bottom of his hockey bag (stupid fucking America and it’s stupid fucking age of 21), and moved to leave the room. Unfortunately, it was at that exact moment that the door to the bathroom opened.

Revealing Shane Hollander, in exactly the state that appeared in most of Ilya’s dreams. Flushed a little red, and practically naked. Big brown eyes looked up at Ilya, doe-like in their surprise. He tightened his grip on the cigarettes to stop himself from doing something stupid like reaching out to touch.

Part of him cursed, absurdly, Hayden Pike. What did BU’s 15th best player do to deserve this view every away game? The other part of him realized he needed to get out of here before he did something he couldn’t take back.

Hopefully Svetlana’s outfit was black, because he was sure he wasn’t going to survive the night.

Chapter End Notes

Special prize to whoever can tell which scene was directly inspired by Shoresy, lol. What can I say, I love a hockey player that knows how to yearn.

Chapter 3 is in the works and will hopefully be posted by next week! Stay tuned <3

Chapter 3: There's No Other, So When's It Gonna Sink In?

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the unanticipated wait! This… perhaps got away on me, so there will now be a long 3rd chapter and a shorter 4th chapter/epilogue thing. Which will be out in a couple days at most, so keep your eyes peeled.

For those who have waited, there is finally pay off! The boys get their shit together! And fair warning, I'm really earning the explicit rating here (seriously it's like... mostly smut).

I hope you enjoy! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shane arrived at the rink 25 minutes after pressing send.

He had used that time to shower, brush his teeth, take the Advil kindly laid out on his nightstand, and try to regain some semblance of his humanity. That time was also helpful to work on repossessing control of his heart, which felt like it was very close to beating out of his chest. The walk over, which usually took close to seven minutes, had been a solid four at the speed his feet were moving. He didn't even know what he was going to say when he actually saw Rozanov, just knew that he needed to say… something.

As soon as he entered the facility, as if on auto-pilot, he ended up at the door to the team's locker room. Private for whatever this conversation was going to be, but still gave him an easy exit if things went sideways. God, hopefully things didn't go sideways.

The silence of the room was enough to let Shane's anxiety start creeping in on him. He paced back and forth a bit before coming to a halt in front of his locker. The names on the stalls stared back at him, although unlike that day they reunited in freshman year they were now adorned with prefixes. A - ROZANOV and C - HOLLANDER. He traced his fingers along the bottom of Rozanov's name plate before letting out a deep sigh. He had a momentary fit of absurd indecision before shaking himself out of it and sitting down under his own name.

He checked his phone again. It had been 35 minutes now, and still nothing but a simple, one word response stared back at him.

ROZANOV: Okay.

Jesus, what had he been thinking? Maybe Rozanov was actually really angry with the way he had acted last night, doing all of that in a public setting and making him spend his Friday night caring for a total lightweight. He must have been annoyed, and now Shane had called him out on a fucking Saturday to the *rink* of all places.

Right as Shane's train of thought was moving into 'spiral' territory, the sound of a door opening broke his concentration, and he looked up from his phone.

Rozanov was in casual clothes, a t-shirt and joggers with his team jacket tossed over top. He still managed to make it look good, of course, unlike Shane who had crawled out of his dorm feeling half-alive and probably looking like it. He was also carrying something in his hands, a brown paper bag and a coffee cup.

"Hi," Shane said, suddenly seized with the inability to get more words out now that he was face-to-face with the recipient of every embarrassing mistake he had made last night. Inconvenient flashes of random party memories were hollering for attention in his brain at a loud and distracting volume. He really should have pre-planned a speech or something.

"Hello." Rozanov's lip twitched when his gaze met with Shane's. Probably taking note of the sweatpants and eye-bags that could only denote someone in the midst of a considerable hangover. "I am surprised. Did not think you would be awake yet."

Shane groaned and let his head fall into his hands. It was literally the middle of the afternoon. "I am *so* sorry. Really. I didn't mean to get that drunk yesterday, I think I just don't drink that often so I don't know how much is too much? And I really didn't mean to make you look after me-" His apology was cut off abruptly by a paper bag being shoved under his nose.

He looked up slowly. Rozanov had walked over to stand right in front of him, and nodded his head a little in the direction of the bag. "Take. Is for you."

"Oh." Shane cautiously reached out and took hold of it, the crinkle of paper in his hands sounding too loud in the echo of the locker room. He opened the top, and stared for a moment too long at what he saw inside. "A bagel? You bought me a bagel?"

"Mm." Rozanov put the drink in his hands down on the bench. "And coffee. You like, no?"

"... Yes." Shane unwrapped the packaging. An everything bagel with plain cream cheese. His usual from the cafe he frequented with Rose. The same cafe that, if memory serves him right, Rozanov had only seen him at once. He loved it there, even if it was a little too expensive for him to visit regularly.

"Thought you would probably feel not so good." Rozanov shrugged. The nonchalance was maddening. To Rozanov this was probably a casual afterthought, but to Shane's already frazzled mind, this simple act was enough to momentarily take away his ability to breathe.

"Thank you." Shane huffed out a laugh, proud of himself for being able to form even one full phrase in the face of whatever the fuck was happening right now.

"I am also surprised… you remember." Rozanov said as he ran a hand through his curls, the only gesture he had done so far that betrayed a hint of nervousness. "Last night."

Shane winced. "Yeah… mostly. Not really the getting home part, but everything before that."

“Everything?” Rozanov was scarily still now, standing not a foot away from where Shane was still sitting down under his locker. His gaze was locked intensely on Shane’s face like he was analyzing it for the smallest tell that he might be lying.

Shane met his gaze, deciding that if he was gonna go down, he’d at least go down telling the truth. “Yeah. Everything.”

Rozanov’s throat bobbed, as he swallowed slowly. “Okay.” There wasn’t really that much space between them, but he still took one step forward. Shane’s gaze was drawn lower, to where their knees were now almost touching. “Then you remember asking to kiss me?”

Shane exhaled a little shakily. “Yeah.”

“And you remember what you called me?”

Shane was still stubbornly looking at knee-height, finding himself unable to face the possibility of seeing what Rozanov’s face looked like when twisted in disgust. He didn’t know what he’d do if he had to see that. “... Yes.”

A gentle hand made contact with Shane’s chin, pushing up slightly so he no longer had any choice. “Look at me.” The voice was almost-whispered, and cracked in the middle of the command.

Shane stubbornly kept his gaze downcast for another second before letting it be drawn up to Rozanov’s face.

“Say it again.” He… did not look disgusted. At all. In fact, Rozanov was looking down at him with eyes opened a little wide, maybe in disbelief.

Shane didn’t need more context to know what he was referencing. “Ilya.”

Ilya blew out a shaky exhale, “Hollander- *Shane*, you have to tell me you meant it.” He leaned down so both his hands were on either side of the bench beside Shane’s hips. It brought their eyesights level, and Shane inhaled sharply at the sudden closeness. “I lose my mind all night thinking you were just drunk.”

Shane bit his lip a little to keep himself from smiling. He could barely believe the direction this conversation was taking. “Ilya, do you know the saying ‘drunk words are sober thoughts’?”

“This is not fucking time for English test, Hollander.” Ilya was so close, Shane could feel his breath ghosting ever so lightly over his lips, and he couldn’t bother with teasing any longer.

“It means can you please just kiss me?”

Shane could barely get the last word out, as Ilya surged forward and finally, *finally* pressed their mouths together.

“*Ilya*-” Shane moaned, as warm lips made contact with his own, and he only had a moment to consider if he should have put chapstick on this morning before he lost track of coherent

thoughts entirely.

It started off slow, exploratory, like they were both still a little bit in shock that it was actually happening. Ilya tasted of mint and coffee and something a little bitter-sweet, and Shane was immediately overwhelmed by want of *more*.

Thankfully, one of Ilya's hands quickly lifted from the bench to grab a hold of Shane's hair, pulling him into a better angle where he could press harder, and reach deeper. His tongue traced over Shane's bottom lip, and he opened up naturally, allowing the kiss to turn messy and a little rough. He realized in a sort of dissociated fashion that he was letting out little embarrassing noises, but as Ilya pressed his tongue further in he couldn't bother trying to stop them.

Both his hands came up and found a natural home in golden curls. They moved freely like he had wanted to so badly last night, marvelling at the feel of softness threading through his fingers, and pulling a little sharply.

"*Mm*, *fuck* Shane-" The noises Ilya let out in return were worth more than a Stanley Cup.

Shane wasn't experienced enough to know if this was what kisses always felt like when you liked the other person, or if Ilya was just unfairly good at this. Knowing him, it was probably the latter. Either way, Shane was starting to understand the big deal about making out. If this is what it felt like, he wasn't sure how he was ever supposed to stop.

However, even in his current state, kissed a little stupid and panting like he had just finished a grueling workout, he managed to remember where exactly they were right now. He gasped out, "Wait- Ilya, the door."

"Locked it when I came in."

"Huh?" Shane pulled back just enough to look at Ilya's face, and whatever further protest he was about to forward died immediately on his tongue. Ilya's lips were red and a little swollen, and his pupils blown out to the point where his bright eyes looked almost black. His brow was also a little furrowed, like he couldn't understand why they had stopped kissing even for a second.

"Said I already locked it, Shane, now come back here." And he surged forward again, reconnecting their lips even through the little giggles that Shane couldn't help letting out.

"Someone's eager." He mumbled against warm lips.

"I have waited long enough," Ilya responded quietly, accent thick with what Shane could only think to be desire.

They continued, alternating between languid and fervent in their kisses. Shane had always been a quick study, and he swiftly started to pick up on what drew the loudest noises out of Ilya, earnestly committing everything to memory.

Then Ilya moved to press soft, slow kisses to the corner of Shane's mouth, moving along his jaw and ending up at his cheekbones. The movement brought Ilya's hair closer to Shane's face, and he couldn't help but breathe in, basking in the stubborn cling of tobacco. It was all so undeniably *Ilya* that Shane could barely take it, feeling a little overwhelmed by the onslaught of sensation.

"You are perfect." Ilya whispered reverently against his skin.

Shane let out a whimper, the praise sending a pang of heat straight to his gut.

"You like that? Then I will never stop telling you." He continued kissing across his cheeks, punctuating each short sentence with a press of soft lips. "You are so pretty. So good. Perfect for me."

"*Fuck*- stop talking." Shane was going to combust at this rate.

"No." Shane could feel Ilya's lips twitching up into a half-smile against his jaw. "I think you like my mouth."

"I'd like it better doing something else," Shane panted, although the casual flirtiness of the words was cancelled out entirely by how breathy his voice sounded.

Ilya laughed, and sat down on the bench beside Shane. He pulled Shane as he went, guiding him up onto his lap, somehow managing to press kisses into his mouth and jaw all the while. "Maybe next time, ah?"

Shane moaned, the idea that Ilya was already thinking of a *next time* was incredibly sexy and a little unbelievable. He could still hardly believe there was a *this time*. His hands naturally came up to circle around his neck, using all the leverage he could get to press himself closer.

As soon as his legs had come down to bracket Ilya's hips, a hand started to run up and down his thigh. Shane had never before wished to be wearing shorts in December, but the fabric that kept Ilya's hands from making direct contact with his skin was deeply offending him right now.

Speaking of fabric, Ilya had on far too much right now. Shane hastily started pushing his jacket back off his shoulders, and the point must have translated because Ilya's hands left their exploring to help shuck it off, tossing it haphazardly beside them on the bench. After, his hands immediately returned to Shane, squeezing at the meat of his thighs before drifting up to grab greedily at his hips.

Shane, taking full advantage of the newly revealed skin, let his hands rub up and down Ilya's arms. He marvelled at finally getting to feel the muscle under his fingertips in ways he could only dream about before.

Shane felt a little crazy, despite the fact that he hadn't even *really* been touched yet. He had been half-hard since the moment Ilya had started kissing him, but now he was straining almost painfully against his boxers, and trying very hard to keep himself from rutting down against Ilya's thigh. He didn't want things to end prematurely.

Shane had imagined himself in this exact position countless times before, but *nothing* compared to reality. Not that he had much of anything else to go off of, but somehow he knew, even just from some kissing and light petting, that Ilya Rozanov had already ruined him for anyone else.

“Please,” He whispered, as the hand on his leg drifted further back to grab at his ass, squeezing a little too hard and pushing a gasp past his lips.

“Please what?” Ilya’s voice was just on the edge of mean, but Shane didn’t have the capacity to be concerned about how much he liked it.

“Touch me,” He whined a little, “Please.”

“I am touching you.” As if to prove the point, Ilya’s other hand tugged a little harder at his hair, sending a light pang of pain through Shane’s scalp and pleasure coursing down to his groin.

“You know what I mean, asshole.” He really was rutting down now, unable to stop himself from chasing the friction below him, dignity be damned. He would worry about denying it later.

“Maybe I don’t know. English is very hard right now.” Ilya pulled back just enough to look Shane in the eyes, voice a little husky as he said the words, “You have to tell me what you want.”

Shane felt himself let out a shaky exhale before closing his eyes “I want-”

Another sharp tug on his hair. “Eyes open, *Shane*.” His name sounded almost like an insult, the way Ilya said it. He felt his face heat up. Why did that turn him on more?

Opening his eyes, Shane swallowed any feeling of lingering embarrassment. He could feel his eyes watering a little, and would frankly do just about anything at the moment if it meant one of Ilya’s strong, calloused hands would wrap around him.

“I want…” Shane groaned, sounding desperate even to his own ears. “I want your hands. On me. I want you to make me come. Please.”

Ilya let out a small groan, and with the hand still gripping in Shane’s hair pulled him into another kiss. But before Shane could slip his tongue in, Ilya pulled away, forcing a small whine out of him. Ilya hushed him as he moved his lips to Shane’s jaw and ran a hand under his shirt. The touch was light and maddening, and Shane whimpered a bit when he stopped to tug on the waistband of his pants.

“*Khoroshiy malchik*.”

Oh, pulling out Russian now was just unfair. “What does that mean?”

“Means *good boy*.” Ilya’s voice was low and raspy, and Shane couldn’t stop his hips from bucking up a little at the unfettered praise. “You listen to me well.”

Then, before Shane could retort, Ilya pushed down the waistband of his sweats and wrapped a hand firmly around his cock. Shane let out a moan that echoed embarrassingly loud in the locker room, and his forehead fell onto Ilya's shoulder. Thankfully the other boy didn't tease him for his over the top reaction.

"*Ilya*, please." He didn't even know what he was begging for at this point, but couldn't stop from practically panting the words into Ilya's neck.

"Needy, hm?" The mirth was clear in Ilya's voice, but he listened and tightened his grip just a little, thumb swiping at the slit and dragging precum down the length of his cock. Shane whined, and started placing messy kisses to whatever skin he could reach.

The friction was removed for just a second, and Shane could hear Ilya spitting into his hand before the touch returned, wetter and warmer. Shane couldn't stop himself from biting down at the crook of his neck. Maybe a little too hard, since Ilya let out a groan.

"*Mm*, you like that?"

"Yes," Shane whined, half-coherent and mumbling, "More, Ilya. Please *more*." His hands were exploring freely, unable to decide where they wanted to touch the most. They moved from Ilya's arms to shoulders to neck and into his hair, then back down again. Drifting occasionally to his back or his chest. Every part of him was perfect, and Shane didn't want to stop until he could map every inch with his touch.

Ilya's hand sped up, twisting roughly on the way down and dragging slower on the way back up. Shane thought maybe he was touching him how he liked to be touched, and got a little hot at that image. He was letting out pants, breathless and hot, into his neck, and squeezed his thighs tight around Ilya's hips in an effort to stay mostly upright.

Unable to resist the urge, he leaned up to bite at the lobe of Ilya's ear, pulling gently with his teeth, and was rewarded with a low whine and tightening of the hand around his cock. Ilya whispered something in Russian, rapid and fervent and too much for Shane to keep up with. The low growl in his voice was enough for him to loosely guess the contents.

The hand that wasn't working him steadily moved under his shirt to grip, almost painfully tight, on the meat of his hip, and Shane idly wondered if it would leave bruises. Logically Shane understood that would be bad, because marks like that would be tough to explain in the showers, but the logical part of his brain wasn't really working right now. Instead, he was thinking about how much he wanted to be marked up, to feel those bruises tomorrow morning and remember who had put them there.

"Close. *Ah*- Ilya. Almost there." He whimpered into his ear, sounding desperate even to himself.

"Yeah?" Ilya sounded a little dazed, voice thick. A verbal reminder that he was feeling it just as much.

"Yea- *mm.* Yeah, please-"

The speed of his hand picked up, now on the edge of rough, and Shane whined, abandoning his current ministrations in favour of resting his head in the crook of Ilya's neck. "*God*, you're perfect."

"*Ilya*." He had lost the ability to say anything other than his name. To *think* anything other than his name, and a string of incoherent pleas.

"Go ahead *zaychik*." Ilya pressed a kiss into his temple, a sweet contrast to just how *dirty* everything else felt. "*Fuck*- Shane. Come for me."

And that was all it took. Pleasure, hot and sharp, surged through him, swelling and radiating from his core to the tips of his fingers. He came with a loud moan, whiny and higher pitched than he would have liked, and it echoed across the walled confines of the room.

His hips stuttered, rutting into Ilya's hand for a few seconds, riding out the waves of pleasure. His jaw went slack, no longer able to form words, leaving his mouth open and pressed into the soft skin of Ilya's neck. As the last aftershocks coursed through him and a tingling sensation replaced the heat in his veins, his moans eventually turned into whimpers, and then long, deep breaths.

Jesus Christ. He would find time to be embarrassed about how fast he had just come later, but right now he could only think about how unbelievably good that had felt.

As the pleasure receded and pleasant satiation washed over his muscles, he angled his head to look down at himself, and realized that he had come… all over Ilya's shirt.

"Oh shit. Sorry." He made a move to wipe with his hand, and then paused, realizing there would be no way to do this that didn't just rub it deeper into the material.

Ilya huffed out a breathless laugh. His chest was moving a little heavy, and he let his head fall back against the wall, pupils dilated and trained on Shane. "No apologies."

"Sor-" Shane started automatically, before stopping himself. Ilya just laughed again, and shucked off the dirty t-shirt, throwing it down beside where his jacket had also been abandoned. Shane was jostled slightly on his lap from the movement, and then quickly distracted by the lines of Ilya's chest now on display, thick and plush, and the slight glow of sweat that coated them. Why hadn't they taken the shirt off *way* sooner?

Shane then gained a sudden consciousness of the fact that he could feel Ilya, hard and straining against his pants, from where they were pressed up together. God, that was hot. That Ilya had gotten hard just from touching him.

The weight of him was impossible to ignore below his thighs, and Shane was immediately overwhelmed with duel needs. One, the need to make this as good for Ilya as it was for him. And two, the need to try something out in real life that he had been dreaming about doing for probably more than a year now. Thankfully, he thought those duelling needs coincided very well.

Before Shane could lose the nerve, he pulled his waistband up to tuck himself back into his pants and slid off of Ilya's lap, keeping his hands firmly on his shoulders to steady himself on humblingly shaky legs. For a second, Ilya looked dismayed at the distance, his brow furrowing a bit as Shane stepped away, and then the expression melted into something very different as Shane slowly let himself fall to his knees.

Ilya looked like he had been given an electric shock, hair mussed horribly from where Shane had been pulling at it and with a sort of punch-drunk daze to his eyes that usually only came after taking a particularly hard hit. He was looking at Shane like he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing, and Shane realized that despite being on his knees, he felt very powerful.

"Are you sure?" Ilya's hand fell naturally to thread through his hair, fingers running surprisingly gentle down the nape of his neck.

Shane brought his hands up to rest on Ilya's thighs, wondering if that was a weird place to put them. He wanted so badly for this to be good, and couldn't help but worry a little now about his own lack of experience. Kissing and getting a handjob wasn't exactly unexplored territory, but he had never done anything even remotely like this before. He had simply moved without thinking, going with what he had imagined and what his body clearly wanted to do.

Ilya must have seen the flicker of hesitation in his eyes, because he said, "We do not have to. Many other fun things to try." He winked at him, and Shane scoffed. The competitive fire that never seemed to extinguish when he was around Ilya burned a little brighter in his gut.

"I'm sure." He looked up at him, trying to convey in his eyes exactly how much he wanted this. Exactly how much he had dreamed of precisely this scenario. "I'm very sure. I want to. It's just… I might not be very good." It hurt his pride a little to admit, but he figured honesty was key in these sorts of situations.

"Is your first time? With a man?"

"... Yes."

Ilya made a sound like a groan, low in his throat, fingers tightening reflexively in Shane's hair. "Then I am very lucky. To be first one to have you like this."

Shane blushed fiercely and tried to cover it with typical gusto. "Oh shut up, I'm just saying-"

"You are saying I am first person to have Shane Hollander on his knees." Ilya was smiling a little now, eyes narrowed. "What an achievement. I should take a picture."

A jolt went through Shane at the mental image, but he would rather die than admit the idea had turned him on. "Jesus Christ *please* stop talking."

"How about you make me, Hollander?"

The use of his last name in such an absurd circumstance was, for some reason, *very* hot. Like an inside joke just between them. It spurred him into action, and he moved his hands up to the waistband of Ilya's joggers, shifting a little on his knees to try and get into a comfortable position. The locker room floor was less than forgiving, but he wasn't about to vocalize a complaint.

Ilya, though, must have noticed the movement, because he grabbed his team jacket that had been unceremoniously tossed onto the bench earlier, and gestured for Shane to move back a bit. Shane easily followed, watching as Ilya folded the jacket up and laid it underneath his knees, creating an extra layer of softness between his joints and the rubber flooring.

"Mm. Better?"

Shane bit down a smile. This stupid, kind, annoying, wonderful man. God, he wanted to suck his dick.

"Cannot risk injury to second best player."

"Oh my god, I hate you," Shane said as he repositioned himself back between Ilya's thighs, hoping that Ilya was perceptive enough to hear what those words really meant.

Then, he turned back to the task at hand. Tugging at the waistband, he managed to pull down Ilya's pants and boxers enough to finally uncover his cock. It was already fully hard (Shane felt relieved at this visual proof he was really truly *desired*) and sprung up to rest against his stomach when he freed it from the fabric.

Of *course* it was nice. Pretty, even. Flushed red at the tip and curved just a little. Sat just below more golden fucking curls. Annoyingly, it seemed there wasn't a singular part of Ilya Rozanov that wasn't damn near perfect.

It was also… big. Not that Shane had a lot of comparisons to draw upon, but he had assumed that sizes in porn were probably unrealistic. Apparently not in this case. The sight was a little daunting, but ambitious, competitive Shane Hollander was not one to let himself be daunted. Tentatively, he reached out to wrap a hand around the base, letting himself simply feel for a moment, testing the weight and touch in his hands.

"*Shane*." Ilya let out a groan at the contact, spurring him on. The hand in his hair was properly pulling now, unconsciously dragging his head closer to the desired destination, but Shane took a few more seconds to enjoy the novel experience of simply touching Ilya Rozanov.

He twisted his wrist, pressing his thumb to the slit at the top, collecting the precum that had dripped out and used it to ease the glide as Ilya had done to him. Ilya let out a sharp hiss and Shane looked back up to the man above him. The slow strokes were still too dry and too gentle to really do much, but Shane enjoyed watching Ilya's face. His eyes blown wide, staring down at him with that mix of naked want, longing, and just a hint of lingering awe.

Then, he let himself be dragged all the way forward, until his cheek was pressed against the crook of Ilya's upper thigh.

“Still okay?” Ilya asked quietly, and Shane felt a surging wave of affection. He trusted that if he said no right now, Ilya would stop, no questions asked. But he *really* didn’t want to stop.

He nodded. “Are you?”

Ilya outright laughed at that, and Shane felt the hand in his hair move to caress over his cheek, thumb running over his freckles. It was unbearably fond. “I am, how you say… never better?”

Shane would have made a comment about Ilya’s new talent with English colloquialisms, but he probably didn’t have the brain function left to remember that word. Also, he didn’t want to wait any longer.

He leaned in, keeping one hand on the base of his cock, and starting by licking a stripe from where his hand stopped all the way to the tip. That pulled out another moan from Ilya, whose hand quickly returned to its preferred place in Shane’s hair.

Pleased with the reaction, Shane continued licking, sometimes just at the tip, sometimes down the shaft. Just testing. Ilya tasted… clean. Salty from the precum and with a hint of soap, presumably from a shower this morning. It was more inoffensive than Shane was expecting from his first time putting another man’s dick in his mouth.

He continued this pattern until Ilya groaned above him, voice low and gravelly, “*Shane*. Stop teasing.”

He took a pause to glance up, and saw that Ilya had thrown his head back against the wall, but seemed unable to tear his eyes completely away from the sight below him. They were still open, still watching. Shane felt a shiver run down his lower back at the raw heat in that gaze.

“Oh? Who’s needy now?” It was meant to be playful, but came out whispered and reverent.

Ilya huffed a short, breathless laugh. “Still you, *miliy*.”

“What does that mean?”

A groan emanated from above him. “Shane, I’m going to die. Vocabulary lesson later.”

Shane bit his lip to stop himself from smiling. It was satisfying beyond measure to tease Ilya even a fraction of the extent that had been done to him.

Now though, he really didn’t feel like teasing anymore. Taking a deep breath, he leaned back in and took Ilya fully into his mouth. Immediately, he was struck with the weight, the heavy feeling of him resting on his tongue, the stretch of his lips. The taste, scent, and touch of Ilya was everywhere, amplified and overwhelming. Shane took a moment, not even moving but just getting used to the sensation, holding him in his mouth and gently moving his tongue around the tip.

Ilya’s head was still thrown back against the wall, and he was whispering almost inaudible encouragements above him. Some even managed to be in English.

“*Mm*. Like that, yes.”

The words encouraged him, and little by little he tried to take more of him into his mouth. He moved back and forth, trying to be careful with his teeth, now with both hands grabbing onto Ilya’s thighs for dear life. He loved feeling the muscles flex under his fingers, noticeable even through fabric when he would swipe his tongue in a particular fashion.

He fed off the physical reactions, soaking them up and trying eagerly to pull out more, hoping that whatever he may lack in experience or technique he could make up for in enthusiasm. He felt tears gathering at the corner of his eyes, as his body fought against the overwhelming feeling of almost choking. In an attempt to blink them away a couple drops fell down his cheeks.

But he kept pushing, enjoying the weight and stretch and taste of Ilya filling his mouth, until he could feel his cock just graze the back of his throat. The first time it happened, he really did choke a little, and pulled back to cough.

“*Ah*- Careful. You can use your hand. Touch what you can’t reach.” One of Ilya’s hands moved to the side of his face, and he felt a thumb gently wipe away his tears. “You do not have to take it all right away.”

Shane took a second to catch his breath a bit, leaning into the hand now resting on his cheek, before dutifully following the instructions, thinking Ilya was probably more knowledgeable about these things. He also was quickly realizing he loved the praise that came when he listened.

“Yes, *mm* Shane, like that," Ilya moaned, “Perfect. That’s it-”

Never one to give up, Shane kept pushing deeper, further. He knew what to expect now, he could do it. He could make this good. He could *be* good.

He still needed a hand to get to the very base, but he had found a good rhythm, letting himself get lost and float in the feeling. He could feel drool dripping down his chin, and the noises he was making were obscene, wet and borderline pornographic. He was starting to feel a bit of pain at the stretch of his lips, but the sting only made it hotter.

“*Shane*, yes. So pretty like this.” Ilya was starting to thrust his hips up a little in time with Shane’s movements, and the hand had tightened in his hair, not enough to make him choke but enough to keep him where he was. He was unconsciously chasing his release, and Shane could tell from the pace, slowly speeding up, he was getting close. “So good for me, *miliy*.”

Shane was really going to have to ask about that one later, but right now he had more important things to focus on. With drool, tears, and precum mixing on his face, and whimpers being dragged from his throat along with each wet drag of Ilya’s cock against his tongue, he couldn’t think anything but *good* and *Ilya* and *fuck, when can we do this again?*

Suddenly, he felt the thigh under his left hand tense, and the thrusts started getting erratic. Pumping in and out of him with enough force that he worried for a second he really would

gag. Then, before he could decide what to do, Ilya was pulling Shane off him, dragging him back just in time.

Ilya came hard and fast, keening forwards with a loud moan that reverberated in the small space of the locker room. His hips bucked a little as his orgasm washed over him, while the hand in his hair kept Shane firmly pressed into the meat of his thigh.

Ilya continued to groan as the last waves of pleasure hit him, and Shane was left panting, resting against his leg… and feeling something hot and sticky drip down his cheek and jaw.

It took him a second to register that Ilya had just come on his face. A hand tentatively came up to feel at the corner of his lips, and came away wet and white. He felt an immediate flare of arousal, combined with a slight edge of disappointment that Ilya hadn't let him completely finish the job.

"*Fuck*." Ilya was breathing heavily above Shane, staring unabashedly at the sight below him. Shane couldn't imagine how fucked-out he must look right now, lips swollen and eyes red-rimmed with tears. Chin shiny with spit, and Ilya's release dripping slowly down his cheek.

Still in a headspace that was maybe a little out of reality, Shane brought a finger to his mouth and licked it.

"*Jesus Christ*."

"*What?* I was just curious." He *had* been curious. Not surprisingly, it mainly tasted bitter, and salty. It wasn't good by any means, but not terrible. He thought it was a taste he wouldn't mind getting used to. Next time, he could take it all.

"You will kill me." Ilya huffed out a disbelieving pant, and stroked gently over the spot where he had been pulling at Shane's hair earlier. Then, as if only now realizing the absolute mess he had just created, he swore, "Fuck. Get up here."

He quickly pulled Shane up, dragging him back up to sit beside him on the bench. "It's okay," Shane protested, and it really was, but Ilya still grabbed his shirt from where it had been crumpled beside him and used the clean parts to hastily wipe away the evidence from Shane's face and neck.

Shane tried to swat him away. "No, you'll get it all dirty."

"Is already dirty. And it can be washed." Ilya dutifully continued his ministries.

"What will you wear back?"

"I have my jacket." Folded on the ground from where it had spent some time under Shane's knees, but sure. At least it had avoided the worst of it.

Then, seemingly satisfied with the cleanliness of Shane's face, Ilya sat back and just stared at him for a while. Shane stared back.

What the fuck happened now.

Over Ilya's shoulder, Shane noticed a long-forgotten brown bag and paper cup. "Oh, shit. The coffee is probably cold."

Ilya laughed, full-bellied and genuine in a way that made Shane's heart sing, even if it was at his expense. "Yes, Shane, probably."

And wow, did he like Ilya saying his name. In the heat of the moment it had been hard to focus on specifics, but now, feeling untold levels of exhaustion and post-orgasm bliss, it did something to his heart to hear his name said with such affection.

Still, he couldn't override entirely the edge of self-consciousness he felt about what he had just done. "Was that… Was that okay? For you?"

Ilya raised an eyebrow at him. "Okay? Hmm… I don't know." He pretended to think about it. "I will probably need repeat experience to know for sure."

"Oh my god." Shane shoved at him halfheartedly, but turned his head away to hide the heat that crawled up his ears. "Just fucking say yes."

Ilya didn't respond right away, and so Shane snuck a glance up at him from where he was trying to hide whatever was going on with his face. Only to be struck a little dumb by how… beautiful he was. Just sitting there, flushed and shirtless and hair an absolute mess, smiling softly at Shane like he had nowhere better to be than in an empty locker room on a Saturday afternoon. With him.

Fuck, he loved him. He was *in love* with him.

"Yes," Ilya said softly, "More than okay."

Shane's breath caught in his lungs. Ilya was rarely earnest, but whenever it happened it was always quietly devastating. He didn't know how to respond.

Thankfully, Ilya broke the silence, "Want to come over?"

"Huh?" Shane had never been to Ilya's apartment. Didn't even know where it was, really.

"I have microwave, you can warm up your coffee. Eat your bagel." Ilya shrugged, as if this was all very casual, but the tense line across his brow betrayed a hint of how much he cared about the answer.

"Oh." Shane didn't know what an invite back to Ilya's place meant given what they had just done, and was suddenly feeling very nervous.

"I have NHL 10. Maybe not fair, though. In your current condition it will not be serious contest."

Shane scoffed. "Oh please, I would destroy you."

"Not if you insist on choosing *Ottawa*."

“I’ll beat you as any team in the league.”

“Oh, will you? Big talk.” Ilya’s smile grew, like he couldn't stop it from spreading across his face. It was such a stupid detail, but Shane noticed then that he wasn’t wearing his pop-ins. He felt the most unbearable wave of fondness. As much as he tried to pretend otherwise, Ilya always listened to him. Even when it was about something as stupid as his teeth.

And suddenly, the nervousness melted away. He had just had the best orgasm of his life, given his first blowjob in an actual fucking locker room, and now the man he was in love with wanted him to come to his apartment to eat bagels and play video games.

What else could he say?

“Well, let’s go then.”

A few days later, Shane’s leg bounced anxiously up and down as he sat in the library, listening to Rose rant about a French professor that she was convinced had a vendetta against her specifically. He nodded along occasionally, and managed the occasional *yeah* or *that’s crazy*, but his head was floating far away. Enough for Rose to quickly take notice, because she suddenly went silent in the middle of a virulent complaint about illegible handwriting on the blackboard.

“Okay, what is wrong with you?”

“Hm?” It took Shane a second to realize a question had been directed at him.

He felt one of Rose’s hands press down on his thigh, stopping his leg from where it had been incessantly moving. “Hey, did something happen? You’re like… not here right now.”

“No, it's fine. Nothing really important, I think.”

“Well *I* think it is, if it’s got you this zoned-out.”

Shane took a deep breath. He didn’t really know the best way to break this news. It seemed like a weird thing to just drop in the middle of a study session.

“What, did you finally fuck Rozanov, or something?” Rose laughed, clearly trying to lighten up the mood, before seeing what was undoubtedly a look of stricken panic on Shane’s face.

“Um…”

The laughter came to an abrupt stop. “Wait, really?”

Shane grimaced a bit. “Well… we didn’t *fuck*, per se.”

Rose's eyes widened and she slapped him on the arm, hard enough that he winced a little. "*Shane*." Now *she* was bouncing up and down at the table. "Why did you let me talk for ages about some stupid class when you're sitting on the fact that you hooked up with Ilya *fucking* Rozanov? That takes privileges for first topic on the agenda, last time I checked."

Shane groaned. "I don't know, felt like a weird conversation starter? Also, must I remind you again that we're in public."

Rose continued her train of thought, reminder left woefully unheeded, "Dude, this is the guy who you've been thirsting over for what, like, a year now? Who you mention every second sentence because *all* your stories include him. I would say that's pretty pertinent fucking information."

"Hey, that's- that's not true." Shane didn't think he talked about Rozanov *that* often. It wasn't his fault that a lot of his stories were hockey-related, and so he just happened to *also* be there most of the time.

"It really is, babe."

"Well it's not even the point."

"No, the point is that I need details. How did it happen?"

Shane sighed. "Well, do you remember the night of your birthday?"

"When you got generationally plastered and I watched an extremely hot Russian devote the rest of his night to taking care of you? I hope to never forget it." Rose pretended to swoon in her chair a little bit, and then came back to herself with a sudden seriousness. "Oh my god, is this all because of me? Did my setup actually work?"

Shane groaned and rested his head in his hands. "I mean… kind of. It was technically the day after, though."

The noise Rose made could only really be described as a squeal. It was very out of character. "Okay, wow. So… what happened? My knowledge ends at him agreeing to take you home."

"Well, I guess he did. I woke up the next morning in my dorms, and remembered an… unfortunate amount of what I'd done the night before"

"Yes, my rug will never be the same."

"*Ugh*, please don't remind me. So, I texted Ilya that we should meet up at the rink-"

"Wait a minute. *Ilya*?"

"... What?"

"He's *Ilya* now?"

Shane flushed a little. He hadn't even consciously realized he'd made the switch. Guess it was too late to turn back now. "*Anyways*, we met up at the rink so I could apologize, and he brought me coffee and bagels from that place you like, which was nice."

"The one down on Beacon?"

"I think so."

"Damn." Rose whistled. "That place is like 7 bucks a latte."

"So, we ended up talking a bit and… stuff happened."

"Jesus Shane, you're the worst story teller in the world. What do you mean *stuff happened*?"

"Like." Shane tried to make a face that would express to Rose what they had done, because he was finding it very hard to say the words out loud. Clearly the message was not being passed on. "Like… stuff."

"Oh my god."

Shane rubbed a hand over his face and leaned in closer to Rose to try and minimize the possibility of traumatizing bystanders. "He jerked me off, okay? And I blew him."

"Wait, at the rink?"

"... In the locker room, to be fair."

"Oh my god, *Shane*." Rose sounded actually a little scandalized at this information, which made Shane concerned that he had maybe acquiesced to Ilya's request too easily. He might need to take a long look at himself in the mirror later. "That's like, your place of work."

"The door was locked!"

"Okay, fine." Rose raised her hands palm-up in a gesture of peace. "This is a judgement free zone… Was it good?"

Shane breathed out a little laugh at the understatement of the century. "Yeah… Yeah you could say that."

"Okay, damn. I get the picture. Then what?"

"Then we just… hung out. Went to his apartment. I was still kind of hungover and we had practice the next day, so…" He trailed off. "We've been texting a lot since then."

Rose got a little more serious, and her next words were low and gentle, "Okay, so sounds like a stellar weekend. What's got you so anxious?"

"I don't know." He ran his hands through his hair. "I feel kind of stupid."

“Shane.” He looked up, and she grabbed his hand to stop it from pulling out more hair, squeezing comfortingly. “You’re not stupid.”

“It’s just, he never actually said anything about- about *us*. I don’t know if we’re dating or if this is just like, a sex thing for him?”

“Okay maybe you are a little stupid.”

“*Hey*.”

Rose took a breather and started speaking slower, like she was explaining a complex concept to a young child. “Shane, a Russian hockey player just spent his Friday night taking care of your drunk ass, took you home, bought you Saturday morning bagels that I know for a fact are like 10 dollars a pop, gave you what was clearly the best orgasm you’ve ever had- no, don’t even bother interrupting, I saw that look on your face- and then… let me make sure I’m getting this right. Took you to his place for a stay-at-home date?”

He paused for a few seconds. It did sound a little dumb when she laid it all out there like that. “Well, I guess. But it wasn’t a *date*, we just played games and stuff.”

“You’re two twenty year old boys, isn’t that like, the perfect date?”

“It’s just *hanging out*,” He stressed. What Shane didn’t share was that he had laughed more that evening than he had in a really long time, and had felt like he was floating the whole walk back to his dorm.

“Okay, so since then this man has done nothing but text you constantly, and you’re wondering if this is… just a sex thing?”

“Well shouldn’t he have… I don’t know, asked?”

“Asked what?”

“To.. to be…” Shane flapped his hands around, finding it difficult to say the word out loud, before finally spitting out a mumbled, “Boyfriends, or something.”

“Not necessarily. Maybe it seemed evident to him without needing to put it into words, or he’s having the same anxiety as you.”

“Please,” Shane scoffed, “Rozanov doesn’t *get* anxious.”

Rose rolled her eyes a little. “Now you *know* that’s not true. He’s just better at hiding it, maybe.”

“But, I was *so* obvious, Rose. He’d have to be stupid not to know I- how I felt.” He stopped himself just in time. That particular confession felt like too much to unload right now.

Rose pressed two fingers to each temple, as if this conversation was physically causing her a headache. “Shane, sweetie. Once again. Do you not think maybe he is *also* thinking that?”

Shane sighed. “I don’t know.”

“Just… don’t do anything based on decisions you’ve made for him, okay? Talk to the guy.”

Shane didn’t know if he was brave enough to take that advice. But he also didn’t know if he was a good enough liar *not* to. “I’ll try.”

“Promise?”

“Sure.”

“Okay. That’s good enough for me.” Rose gave his hand one last comforting pat, and turned back to the whirlwind of papers in front of her. “Now, I really do need help with French. These conjugations are fucking killing me.”

Shane sighed, but felt like a small weight had been lifted off his shoulders nonetheless. “Fine, let me see.”

It took, embarrassingly, another month after Shane’s discussion with Rose for him to get up the courage to bring up the topic. In his defence, finals season was upon them by mid December, and then after that two weeks of Christmas holidays that Shane spent with his parents in Ottawa. So the timing hadn’t felt right… and also he was maybe a coward.

Over that month they continued texting, talking, practicing, and annoying each other relentlessly, with the only exceptional change in their relationship being they were now also hooking up whenever they had a second of spare time and could find a room to be alone in. The walls of Shane’s dorm and Ilya’s apartment (and once, memorably, the rink showers) had been forced to bear witness to many… many things. Shane was proud to say he was getting pretty good at giving blowjobs. He hadn’t been lying about being a quick study.

Another change was that a host of new (distinctly sexual) additions had been supplied to the near-infinite rolodex in Ilya’s brain labelled “Hollander Chirps.” Shane couldn’t hit the post or miss an open pass without a “Big night, Hollander? Still tired?” being thrown in his direction. Any variation of teasing him about having sore knees or low stamina seemed to be among llya’s new favourites.

Shane could give almost as good as he could take, though, and it usually meant they both left the ice high on the combined adrenaline of competition and sexual tension. Post-practice hookups had now become yet another thing Shane loved about playing the beautiful sport of hockey.

The two weeks spent apart during the holiday season had been made easier by the fact that they texted just about every day, and also Ilya had enlightened Shane to the possibility of using Skype for things other than basic communication. The pixelation was annoying, and

sometimes words came through a little choppy and strange, but Shane thought it was incredibly hot that Ilya could get off just by looking at him, sometimes just by *listening* to him.

Then, they reconvened in the early days of January, and Shane decided it was time to give his balls a tug and take Rose's advice. He was clearly not falling out of love anytime soon, and in fact every day he spent in Rozanov's presence it was only getting worse. He thought the fondness must be so obvious, painted all over his face whenever they talked, or skated, or had hands down each other's pants. But Ilya hadn't said anything, and so neither had he.

That ended today. Hopefully. Maybe.

They were in Shane's dorm, studying together despite the fact that they had exactly zero shared classes. Sometimes it was just nice to exist quietly in each other's presence, even if the actual studying rarely lasted *that* long. Shane was sitting at his desk, textbooks open in front of him, while Ilya sprawled on the bed and halfheartedly scrolled through his laptop, which moved gently up and down on his stomach in tandem with his breathing.

His feet fell off the end, too tall for the twin mattress, and he was wearing one of those stupid cut-off tees he always wore to the gym. Because Shane was easily distracted, he was spending more time sneaking glances at the generous swell of Ilya's biceps and flex of his forearms than working on anything economics-related.

"You need something?" Shane could hear the smirk in his voice from here. He supposed that was fair. He hadn't been subtle.

"No." He lied.

"Mm, *sure*."

Then Ilya got a notification on his phone, and rummaged it out of his back pocket to check. He huffed out a laugh at whatever he was reading on the screen, and Shane resolutely did not pout.

"Who's that?" He tried to sound casual, and likely failed.

"Just Svetlana," Ilya replied. "She is in Boston for… I don't know, conference or something."

"Oh." Shane felt something ugly and unwarranted rise up in his throat. He had heard about Svetlana before, in bits and pieces. As far as he knew she was one of Ilya's only friends from back in Russia, but he had never met her in person. He was also sort of unsure what type of 'friends' they were, exactly. "So you'll… meet up with her, I guess?"

Ilya shrugged lazily, tapping something away on his phone in response. "Maybe. She wants to watch one of our games, if she can."

Shane nodded slowly, not sure how to ask what he really wanted to. Ilya continued, though, "She loves hockey, and likes you very much. I don't know why, when you check with

strength of toddler."

"I value speed and control over brute force." Shane's annoyed response was ingrained muscle memory at this point. "Clearly Svetlana appreciates that."

"Yes, I never said she had good taste."

Shane huffed out something like a scoff, and Ilya put his phone down to look at him. There was a sharp glint in his eye, and he continued, "Why do you want to know? If we will meet?"

This was the perfect opening. Shane stared back, trying to summon the assured confidence of Rose. "Just… wondering." Okay, well that was a failure.

"Wondering?" Ilya sat up now, closing his laptop and placing it on the nightstand beside the bed. The glint sharpened, and his eyebrow raised a little. "Are you jealous, Hollander?"

"What? I mean- no, not really." He scratched at the back of his head and couldn't maintain eye contact anymore, letting his gaze drift around the room.

"I think you are a bad liar."

"No, really, I'm not jealous. I don't have any *right* to be jealous, so… of course not. You know, we never said anything, and it's not my place to tell you what to do. I know you and Svetlana have been friends for such a long time, so-"

"Shane." Ilya's voice cut through his anxious rambling, and his focus snapped back to the bed. At this point Ilya's brows were furrowed a bit, his eyes narrowed in confusion. "What are you talking about?"

"Um… I don't know?"

"What do you mean *right* to be jealous?"

"Well, we never said we were… exclusive." The word felt weird in Shane's mouth, but the other options felt like too much. "So… I shouldn't be jealous, or anything."

Ilya's eyes widened a bit, his head tilted forward like this conversation was confusing him in a way Shane didn't really understand. "You have been seeing other people?"

"What, *no*. Of course not."

"Okay, well neither have I."

Shane paused. "Really?"

"Really."

"Not since…?

"Not since."

Shane took a moment to digest that information. “So Svetlana?”

“Is good friend from back home.” The confusion and momentary shock had died a little from Ilya’s eyes, and now he just looked sort of concerned. “Shane, we are dating, no?”

Shane, if he had been drinking something, would have probably choked on it. Even with nothing, he coughed a little, and raked his eyes across Ilya’s face for any sign of insincerity. All he found was a light blush on his cheeks, novel and beautifully pink. He tried to commit the shade to memory.

“We are?” He sounded a little stupid, and terribly hopeful.

“Yes, I think. Probably.” Ilya grinned and scratched at his wrist. The only sign he might also be feeling the thrumming nerves that were overwhelming Shane’s heart. “I thought this was obvious.”

“But you never said anything.”

“Oh my god, you boring Canadians.” Ilya rolled his eyes, but the insult came out tender. “Must say every little thing.”

“I don’t think this is a *little thing*, Ilya.”

At that, Ilya stood up off the bed and moved forward towards where Shane sat behind his desk. He stopped when he was standing almost between his thighs, and exaggeratedly took both of Shane’s hands in his own, like he was making a solemn vow. “Okay, then. Shane Hollander.” He cleared his throat with mock-seriousness. “Will you please be my boyfriend, and not fuck any other men please?”

Shane laughed, trying to shove lightly at Ilya’s chest, his own so full it felt like it would burst. “What do you mean? Thought I already was.”

The hands grabbing his own squeezed a little tighter, and they stared at each other for a long moment.

Then, Ilya got a gleam to his eyes that Shane had learnt a long time ago never meant anything good. He bent down, and before Shane could get out even a syllable of warning, two arms were wrapped around his waist and he was being thrown, straight from his chair and over Ilya’s shoulder.

“Put me down! Fucking- *Ilya*.” Shane couldn't do anything but cling on to the material of his shirt for dear life, his feet swinging stupidly in the air. “If you drop me I swear to god-”

“I will not drop you. You weigh nothing.” Shane felt a hand connect sharply with his ass, and decided to blame the rushing of blood to his face on being upside-down. The rush of blood elsewhere was less easily explained away.

“I’m 200 pounds.”

“And I am very strong.” Ilya turned with him, walking a few steps towards the bed, and tossed him down casually. Shane bounced once on the mattress, letting out a little *oof*, still not over how insanely hot it was that Ilya could throw him around like that.

The hem of his shirt rode up where it had dragged against Ilya’s shoulder, and he was sure his hair was sticking up in every direction. He must have looked ridiculous, but Ilya was staring at him with the slightest smile lingering at the corner of his lips, and deep, *hungry* eyes. Eyes roving over his face and then down to his now-exposed waist. Shane felt a little vindicated that his ears had turned ever so slightly red.

“What are you looking at?” He pulled at his shirt in an attempt to fix it, but Ilya leaned forward to grab his hands, pressing them firmly into the mattress on both sides of his head.

“I am *looking* at my boyfriend. Is that not allowed?”

Shane’s heart skipped a beat. Such a stupid word. But it made him so happy. “Only if you’re going to do something about it.”

“I don’t know. Maybe today I just look.” The grin on his face was wolfish, and Shane thought he didn’t entirely hate that idea. But not now. Not when he had just learned he was dating Ilya Rozanov. Had been for a fucking month and didn’t even know about it.

“Another time, yeah?” Shane said, and Ilya raised an eyebrow. He probably hadn’t expected him to take the comment seriously. “I want you to touch me, today.”

Ilya’s hands tightened on his wrists, and he leaned down to whisper in his ear, “As you wish.”

Shane immediately softened in his grip. He had made Ilya watch *The Princess Bride* over the holidays, and now he took great pleasure in quoting it back to him. Ilya had (of course) decided *immediately* that he was Westley, and Shane Buttercup.

Fuck, how had he not realized they were dating.

Ilya leaned in the rest of the way to close the distance, pressing their lips together in a kiss that was achingly, lovingly soft. Shane keened up into it, enjoying the familiar warmth and aftertaste of coffee on his lips.

They took their time, moving against each other and slowly deepening the kiss. Ilya adjusted his grip so he could hold Shane’s wrists down above his head with one hand, letting the other trace up and down his side. Shane didn’t think it would take much to break the grip if he wanted to, but he loved the feeling of letting Ilya do what he wanted, of giving up control. He trusted him. He knew that he would make them both feel good.

“What do you want to do?” Ilya broke away for a second to ask, just far enough away that Shane could still feel lips move against his.

Shane looked up at him, and knew immediately what his answer was. They had done a lot of things together, in the last month. A lot of Shane’s firsts had been taken by the man above

him. Except one.

“Please, can you fuck me?” Ilya’s eyes widened, and there was a pause. Feeling awkward, Shane continued before he could respond, “I’ve been thinking about it, and I don’t trust anyone the way I tru-”

He was cut off by lips pressed to his. “God, so perfect for me.” Ilya murmured, trailing kisses along his jaw. “You want me to fuck you? Of course, I will fuck you, *miliy.*”

Shane leaned into the kisses. He really *had* thought about it a lot. To a concerning extent, really. But he hadn’t been able to muster the courage before to say anything out loud. The timing had never really seemed right. Maybe something about the word *boyfriend* had broken the dam in his mind, though, because now he couldn’t imagine going another day without it.

“I showered this morning. And I’ve… practiced.”

Ilya went still. “Practiced?”

He nodded, ears heating up violently. Shane had done his research, nervous about the experience differential between them and unable to overcome the irrepressible need to be *good* at everything he did, no matter what it was. He always felt better over-prepared than under-prepared, and had the suspiciously deleted search history and embarrassing Amazon purchases to prove it.

“Practiced with what?” Ilya pressed the words into Shane’s neck.

“You fucking know with what.”

“Yes, but fun to hear you say it.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “A dildo, you ass.”

“... How big?”

“Do you want to fuck me or not?”

“I want.” Ilya lifted his head back up to make eye contact with him. Shane sucked in a gasp at the lack of hesitation, and the heat lacing the words. He repeated, softer this time, “I want.”

“Okay.” The reality of what Shane had just asked, and what was now about to happen fully swept through him, and he suddenly felt… *shy*. Which was a little weird, given the amount of things they had already done together. But now this big step was *really* happening, and anxieties were bubbling up in his chest.

Thankfully, Ilya was now rather skilled at calming him down, and began pressing kisses to every available bit of Shane’s body, moving bit by bit until the tension had seeped out of each muscle. He slipped his hands under Shane’s shirt, pulling it over his head and quickly covering every inch of the now-exposed skin with his mouth.

Ilya let go of Shane's hands to feel at his chest, grabbing and squeezing at the plush muscle in a way that made him a little self-conscious. Given how many women Ilya had been with, he wasn't sure what joy he got out of touching a man's chest. But with the way he could feel him hardening in his pants from where he was pressed down into Shane's thigh, he sure wasn't about to raise a complaint.

Hands suddenly freed, Shane used them to pull the hem of Ilya's shirt up, trying valiantly to get him into a state of equal undress. Ilya was not being helpful in the effort, though, as he seemed more interested in attaching his lips to one of Shane's nipples, and *biting*. Hard.

"*Ah*- Jesus. *Ilya*." Shane gasped, and Ilya immediately soothed the bite with his tongue, properly sucking on his chest now in a way that would surely leave hickies. Shane had stopped caring about marks weeks ago, honestly. The team just thought there was a girl he hooked up with that was particularly… aggressive. It was only a semi-incorrect assumption.

"Say it again."

"What?"

"My name." Ilya was damn near growling into his chest at this point, and a pulse ran through Shane at the possessive tone.

"Ilya," Shane breathed out, and then just for good measure, and because he could, "Ilya, *please* Ilya-"

"*Fuck*-" Ilya dove back down and Shane arched his back a bit, enjoying the half-pleasure half-pain of Ilya's mouth mapping bruises onto his chest. Only after some time, when he was apparently satisfied with his work, did Ilya pull back a bit, admiring the results. Long, golden lashes gave a pretty flutter to frame dark, roaming eyes. "You drive me crazy."

Good. You drove me crazy a long time ago.

Out loud he said, "Off," impatiently pulling at the offending fabric of the shirt in front of him. The corner of Ilya's lip curled up at his desperation, but he complied, tugging it off in a smooth motion that had no right being so attractive. As he leaned back down Shane's hands found a place immediately on broad shoulders.

Ilya's hands, meanwhile, were pulling at the waistband of Shane's pants, and he lifted his hips up to help him drag them off. Not wasting any time, Ilya pulled off both his pants and boxers in one fell swoop, and in a few quick seconds Shane was left completely naked. Sprawled out on his tiny twin bed, cock hard and already leaking against his stomach. He had a nervous thought that maybe it would have been better to turn the lights off.

"Fuck, you're beautiful." Ilya sat back a little on his heels, eyes drifting heavily up and down Shane's body, catching like a magnet whenever they found something particularly interesting. They were weighted with something he couldn't name, and the earnest attention was difficult to handle.

"You see me in the showers all the time."

“Not like this.”

Fully hard, flushed to his chest, and covered in fresh hickies, Shane found it tough to deny that. He decided to change the subject. “Come on, you too.” He kicked at Ilya’s legs, trying to get his point across. Apparently successfully, because Ilya detached himself, standing for a second to shuck his pants and underwear off before climbing back into bed.

“Better?” Ilya grinned, cocky in a way that was completely deserved.

Shane could barely tear his eyes away from his lower body long enough to meet his gaze. There was no reason to try and lie. “Much better.”

They reconnected with what seemed like double the intensity, kisses hard and hungry. Ilya licked into his mouth greedily, tracing behind his teeth and around his tongue. Shane felt *consumed*. His hands desperately skimmed across each new piece of revealed skin as he eagerly drank in everything Ilya was willing to give him. It made him a little torn. On one hand, he could kiss and touch a naked Ilya Rozanov all day, but if things stayed at their current pace and intensity, there was no way they were going to get anywhere close to fucking before Shane finished.

He pushed lightly against Ilya’s chest, who followed easily, leaning back just enough to search Shane’s eyes for any sign of discomfort. He surely didn’t find any. Shane made to turn himself over, a motion made a little awkward by the fact Ilya’s hands were bracketing him in on both sides.

Ilya immediately reached out to stop him, making a little noise of disappointment in the back of his throat. “Ah- What are you doing?”

“Won’t it be simpler on my stomach?” He had read something about that online.

“Maybe, but I want to see you.”

Shane felt a flare of warmth in his gut. “Wow, such a romantic.”

“Don’t you do yoga, Hollander? Should be easy,” Ilya said with a grin, and that was enough of a challenge to set him alight.

Shane stretched a hand out to the nightstand, still thankfully within arm’s reach, opening the first drawer and pawing around until he came up with a packet of condoms and bottle of lube. The bottle was transparent and clearly half-used. Ilya raised his eyebrows.

“Oh fuck off.”

“I say nothing.”

“I can see you *thinking* it.”

Shane threw everything down beside him on the bed, and Ilya grabbed a pillow from behind Shane, tapping his ass and gesturing for him to raise his hips. When he acquiesced to the touch, Ilya slid the pillow under his lower back, propping him up a bit.

Before Shane could be embarrassed about the position, about just how much he was on *display* right now, Ilya grabbed one of his legs and moved it over his shoulder. The inside of his knee was almost pressed to Ilya's ear, and a hand ran up and down his leg in gentle, calming touches.

"Nice view," Ilya stated, so matter-of-factly that one of Shane's arms came up to cover his own eyes. Never mind, he was *incredibly* embarrassed.

"I'll kill you."

"Would not be bad place to die." Then, he reached forward to pull Shane's arm off of his face, dragging it down to his side. "Said I want to see you. Stop this."

He whined a bit, but let his hand be pulled back down to his side. Ilya's eyes were glued intensely to his ass, and he could feel his large hands grabbing, kneading at the muscle. Fingers pressing into soft skin and pulling his cheeks gently apart. It was *really* flustering to have such acute attention paid to that part of his body, and Shane fought every instinct within him to hide again.

Then, Ilya's careful exploration was paused as he grabbed the lube from where it had been tossed onto the bed, and popped the cap to drizzle a generous amount on his fingers. Shane's breathing picked up, mostly out of anticipation but also a rising tide of arousal. The sight of Ilya looming above him, attention focused so singularly, was hot enough to quench any lingering embarrassment about his position.

At the feeling of a cold, slick finger gently circling his rim, Shane gasped. His fingers tightened in the sheets, bunching up the fabric beside him.

"Sorry. Will be cold at first."

"Yeah, I got that," Shane huffed out, trying to will his body to calm down. He knew it would be harder if he was tense. It helped that while one of Ilya's hands was circling him, the other was massaging at his hip, slowly coaxing him into relaxing. After a minute of that, the tension was mostly drained out of him, and he was even starting to feel a little impatient.

"Ready?" Ilya's voice was low and thick.

Shane nodded jerkily. The hand on his hip moved up his thigh, holding him tightly in place. And then he felt one finger slowly enter him.

He groaned, getting used to the sensation as Ilya gently started to move. His eyes fell closed, unable to focus on anything except the sensation of his *boyfriend* inside of him.

"Good?"

"Good. Very good." And then, after a minute or so of Ilya moving slowly, still with just one finger pressing languidly in and out, Shane moaned, "*Ilya*. More. You can do more."

Shane could feel Ilya shudder a little, and let out a heavy breath. "Okay, okay. Be patient." But still he readjusted Shane's leg on the bed so he was spread a little wider, and pressed

another finger inside of him.

Shane let out a whine, groaning at the stretch. His toes curled in and he couldn't help but push backwards to meet the fingers. When he had done this on his own, the angle had been sort of awkward, and he had honestly found the whole experience a little hard to enjoy. This was… very different. Ilya's fingers were long, thicker than he was used to, and he didn't have to worry about anything except savouring every push and pull. Every stretch. The slow drag out and the faster push back in.

"When you… *practiced*. What did you think about?"

A sharp twist of his fingers made Shane arch his back a little, and he rasped out, "Even now you can't shut up?"

"Nope. Tell me." Suddenly, the fingers stopped moving inside of Shane, and he choked out a whine. He tried to push back, to find the friction he wanted so badly, but a firm hand on his hip pressed him down into the pillow, stopping any attempts at movement. "Tell me, and I will keep going."

"You are *such* an asshole."

Ilya pressed a kiss to the inside of Shane's knee, where it was slung over his shoulder, and he could feel the smirk without even looking. "Yes, now tell me."

Shane huffed an annoyed scoff. He adamantly refused to make eye contact, knowing Ilya would be unbearably smug about what he was about to admit. "I thought about you." And then, a little mumbled, "Obviously."

The fingers resumed their movement, but slower, tentative, just barely dragging in and out. The hand on his hip still kept him frustratingly still. "Mm… what about me?"

"Jesus Christ."

"I want details, Shane."

"I thought-" An unexpected nip of Ilya's teeth at the sensitive skin of his inner thigh made him gasp, thought process momentarily cut off. "I thought about… this. You opening me up. Your- Your hands. They're bigger than mine. *Ah*- thought they would feel better."

He didn't know where this was coming from, but for some reason the words wouldn't stop flowing. Not with the maddeningly slow drag of Ilya's fingers still teasing him, and his mouth working little bruises into the soft skin of his leg.

"And do they?" He punctuated the question with a sharp, quick thrust, and Shane moaned.

"*Yes*." The bedding was now a mess below him, violently scrunched up in his fingers. He didn't even need to be prompted anymore to continue, "Thought about you above me, your arms- *Ah Christ*. Thought about how big you are… what you would feel like inside me."

"*Fuck* Shane."

He liked getting reactions like that. Liked hearing Ilya lose a bit of control, when his voice got guttural and dark. He reached down with one hand, wanting to touch him, to feel Ilya's cock where it was lying hard and heavy against his own stomach. But his hand was quickly swatted away.

"Ah-" He gave a little *tsk*. "You will not do that if you want me to fuck you." And wasn't that just something. Ilya Rozanov, at risk of coming too fast because of *him*.

Ilya was pumping in and out of him now at a good pace, pressing his fingers outwards almost in a scissoring motion as he went. It wasn't anything Shane couldn't handle, his dildo was bigger than this, but it was still enough for him to feel a light burn at the stretch. And then, he bent his fingers a little, crooking them up, and Shane saw stars.

The pleasure pulsated out in waves, a ripple running white-hot through him. He didn't even realizing he was making noise until he heard Ilya chuckle "*Fuck*- There. Ilya, there. *Please*."

Now that he had found it, Ilya wouldn't stop. The sounds being drawn out of Shane spurred him on, as he continued angling his fingers in just the right way, driving them deeper with each moan and whimper.

Shane could feel tears gathering in the corner of his eyes, and then Ilya added a third finger. The tears fell freely onto his cheeks as he closed his eyes tight, the stretch aching and the pleasure overpowering. It felt so good. *Too* good. He rocked back onto the fingers, trying to urge Ilya into hurrying up without saying anything.

"Doing so well. You take me so well, Shane. Perfect for me."

Shane choked down a little sob that threatened to escape at the praise. He was already so far gone it was pathetic, and Ilya hadn't even entered him yet. But that was something to be embarrassed about later. "*More*. Please, Ilya. Fuck me."

"Think you are ready?" The words were teasing, but Shane could feel the genuine question lying underneath. He opened his eyes and looked at Ilya above him, flushed and hard and *big*. His heart beat a little faster, feeling a spike of intimidation, before being overwhelmed with a flood of pure *want*.

"Yes. Please. Need to feel you."

Ilya let out a string of Russian curses, some Shane recognized from on the ice and some he didn't, and leaned back in for a quick, hard kiss. All teeth and tongue and heat. But then he pulled back, and the fingers left Shane entirely. Shane whined at the sudden emptiness, clenching around nothing as he leaned up to chase his mouth.

Ilya smirked at the whine, like he was filing that information away to tease Shane about later. Now, though, he was focused on grabbing a condom from the bed and quickly ripping the packet open.

After he had rolled the condom on in a smooth, clearly practiced motion that Shane tried very hard not to feel jealous about, he was once again picking up the bottle of lube, and drizzling a

liberal amount into his palm. He took the same hand and used it to gently stroke his cock until it was generously coated, staring intently down at Shane the whole time.

“Don’t be scared, it will fit.”

“I’m not scared.” Shane bit back instinctually. And he wasn’t… mostly. More than anything he just *wanted*.

“Is okay. I’ll go slow.” Ilya had a hand on each knee, pushing both of Shane’s legs back and up until he was practically folded in half. He felt the strain in his back and thighs, but nothing painful. He thanked god for all the flexibility-enhancing hip stretches his sport required. Who would have thought they were so multipurpose.

Then, Ilya was leaning down beside Shane’s head on one strong arm, both keeping himself propped up and trapping Shane down. The other was still on his cock, stroking slowly and now guiding it gently to Shane’s entrance.

“Okay?” Ilya said with a pause, and Shane sucked in a deep breath.

“Yeah. Okay.” And with that reassurance, he ever-so-slowly pressed in. Shane immediately gasped, and his hands flew to find some sort of purchase on Ilya’s back. His fingers ended up squeezing *hard*, pressing into the meat of his shoulders, and he hoped Ilya wouldn’t mind if he left scratches. Even with just the head inside the tightness was making Shane lose his mind a little.

Ilya was also breathing heavily, seemingly fighting to control himself and go slow, as promised. After a few breaths, he started moving in a half-inch at a time, pausing long enough after each press to give Shane time to adjust.

“Oh my god-” Shane gasped feebly, overwhelmed by the feeling. It was nothing at all like the toy that was currently hidden somewhere in the bottom drawer of his dresser. The cold, smooth rubber hadn’t been the most comfortable in his experience, and couldn’t compare with the soft warmth now radiating through him. In all his solo runs, he had never felt this… *full* before.

By the time Ilya had made it almost all of the way in, Shane could barely breathe, trying to will himself to relax his muscles and get used to the feeling of being stretched completely. The burn was brighter now, pain and pleasure mixing into a strange, delicious blend deep in his gut.

Ilya made to start moving again, and Shane reached out to grab his arm. “Stop. Stop.”

Immediately the movement paused. “Hurts? Too much?”

Ilya began to pull out, but Shane only grabbed onto him tighter and held him there before he could draw back. “*No*. Don’t leave.”

Ilya’s eyes searched his, and Shane felt warm at the concern he could see lacing under the bright, blazing desire. Shane wanted to be good at this, wanted to do *well*, but he also knew

Ilya would kill him if he let himself get hurt.

“Just… stay here. Don’t move. Let me get used to it.” Shane breathed in a little deeper, adjusting gradually to the feeling.

“Is okay if it’s too much,” Ilya whispered, “You do not have to be good at everything first try.”

“Fuck you, I can do it. Just gimme a second.” Shane tried to regain control of his breathing, and let his body accommodate Ilya’s size.

Ilya took the chance to lean down, staying very still where he was pressed inside of Shane but using his mouth to press wet, hot kisses to his neck and collarbone. He licked greedily up to his ear and bit at the lobe, successfully distracting Shane long enough that his muscles slowly untensed.

“Okay, you can move,” He said after a couple minutes, when the ache in him had morphed into a throbbing, yearning desire for more. He used a heel to dig a little into Ilya’s back, emphasizing his point.

“So bossy.” Ilya’s lip twitched at the sudden impatience, and he bit again at his ear. Shane whimpered at the sharp tug, but Ilya otherwise stayed frustratingly still. Shane realized faintly he was waiting for him to beg for it.

And he would, because the desire coursing through him was thoroughly outweighing any dignity left standing. “*Please*- Ilya. Please move.”

“Yes, *captain*.”

Shane flushed at the title, but as Ilya slid almost all the way out and slowly pressed back in, pressing the remainder of the way in. All the air was pushed out of his lungs and any dream of a retort died on his tongue. *God*, it felt good. Ilya wasn’t properly thrusting yet, just gently moving in and out, slowly getting Shane used to the feeling, and he already felt a little crazy.

His heels dug harder into Ilya’s back, eyes fluttering closed. His dick hadn’t even been touched yet, but it was hard and leaking messily onto his stomach. He wanted friction, *needed* something to focus on other than the continual pulses of pleasure from where Ilya was now rocking steadily into him, or he was going to lose his mind.

But the hand that had been inching down his stomach was grabbed roughly at the wrist, stopping its progress. “Not yet.”

His mouth fell open, pleas rendered mute on his tongue. All that came out was a panted, “*Mean*.”

“Be patient. I will touch you.” He kept Shane’s wrist in a tight hold, and started thrusting a little harder, a little faster. Picking up speed and intensity while Shane could do nothing but hold on for dear life.

The noises were obscene, the slap of skin on skin every time Ilya drove up into him filling up the small dorm room. Not to mention the sounds coming out of Shane's lips. He could barely believe they were his, moans pitched high and whiny with desperation.

Ilya wasn't silent either, panting heavily and pressing frequent volleys of whispered Russian into Shane's knee, or chest, or neck. Sometimes English would slip out, and Shane would feel the words like a physical weight in his gut.

"So good, Shane. So good for me." He tugged Shane's hand up to his mouth, kissing at his palm and breathing the words reverently.

"Oh *fuck,*" Shane groaned. "Don't stop Ilya. Please don't stop."

His thrusts were starting to get stronger, powerful and just on the edge of rough, and Shane didn't know how much longer he could hold on.

Ilya must have felt how he was losing control, stomach twitching and toes curled up tight behind his back, because he *finally* reached down and wrapped a hand around his poor, aching cock.

"*Ah*-" Shane keened up, back leaving the mattress at the sudden contact. It was overwhelming, and his body couldn't decide whether to push back down into Ilya's cock or thrust up into his hand. "*Fuck*-"

"Like you were made for me." God, Ilya's voice sounded wrecked. Like he was barely holding on, too.

"Yes, yes." Shane had lost the ability to be embarrassed about anything anymore, mumbling out a slurred agreement.

"Say it."

"Made for you. Only for you." He whined, and opened glassy, tear-filled eyes to look up at Ilya as he said, "*Yours*. I'm yours."

The groan that came out of Ilya was low and hoarse, "*Mm* fuck- Shane. *Mine*."

That one word, and a few strong tugs of Ilya's hand around his cock, was all it took to push Shane right over the edge.

His orgasm surged over him in rolling waves that came hard and fast, his toes curling and thighs twitching with the intensity of it. His back arched up off the mattress, and Shane's stomach spasmed, unintentionally tensing up and squeezing Ilya inside of him.

That milked a deep groan out of the man above him, and Ilya gave a few more erratic half-thrusts before he also came with a throaty moan, muffled into the skin of Shane's neck. Shane could feel the surge of heat through the condom as he spilled into it, the weight of it maddening. He had an errant thought about what it would feel like without the barrier between them. What it would feel like if Ilya had finished inside, leaving behind that trace of his physical claim and-

Shit, he hadn't realized he'd be into that.

Ilya sort of collapsed on top of him, and for a few seconds they both just laid there, panting into the sudden silence of the room, before Shane groaned out a weak, "You're heavy."

A short laugh was huffed into his neck, before Ilya dragged himself back up a bit and slowly pulled out. Shane whined at the exit, overstimulated and sensitive. He vaguely made note of Ilya taking off the condom and tossing it into the trash can, but he was mostly focused on trying to regain control of his limbs and brain. He felt like he finally understood the phrase *fucked stupid*.

Eventually, Ilya fell back on top of him, arms coming up to wrap around Shane and pull him into a sort of cuddling position. Shane had his head resting on Ilya's shoulder, arm thrown lazily across his chest, and enjoyed the feeling of rubbing a foot gently up and down his ankle.

Shane took the moment, this rare uninterrupted chance of being quiet and up close to just… look. Look at the high curve of Ilya's cheekbones, and the tall, crooked line of his nose. Those blonde lashes, curving like angel wings over honey-soaked eyes. It felt impossible, that this man was really in his bed right now, in his *arms*.

What brought him back to reality was the sensation of something wet and sticky now drying out on his stomach, beginning to turn itchy and uncomfortable. Shane *really* didn't feel like moving, and thus decided this was Ilya's job.

Ilya easily assented and made a move to clean them up a bit, which ended up being more of an ordeal than anticipated. Tissues got them half of the way there, but Shane had sort of forgotten that he lived in a student dorm, and thus had to send Ilya down the hallway to wet a washcloth in the shared bathrooms.

Ilya had, of course, complained, even as he put his pants back on and made a move for the door. "You can't go? Is your bathroom."

"If I run into someone in the hallway right now I will actually die of embarrassment. What if one of my neighbours heard me?"

"Oh, they *definitely* heard you." Ilya snickered, "You were very loud."

Shane willed his ears not to turn red. "That's my point. I have to continue to live with these people. You don't. *Please* just go."

"Okay, but if someone asks, I will say *yes*, I was just with Shane Hollander, and *yes*, I know, I must be very good at sex to make him sound like that-"

"Oh my god *leave*."

Ilya returned quickly, the faint trace of a smile still on his lips, and holding a warm, wet washcloth. He dutifully wiped them both down (despite weak protestations from Shane that

he could do it himself) and they started picking up their clothes from the floor before getting distracted by each other and falling back into bed half-dressed.

One of Ilya's hands came up to gently thread through his hair, fingernails scratching lightly at his scalp and bicep curling around the back of his head like the world's best pillow. Shane squeezed in a little tighter, nuzzling his face deeper into the crook of Ilya's neck and making soft sounds of contentment at the head scratching.

"So?" Ilya's voice came from above him a little muffled, spoken into his hair. "Real thing is better, ah?"

Shane chuckled, sounding a little hoarse even to his own ears. "Not sure. Maybe I need… what was it? A *repeat experience*."

Ilya's chest moved gently with laughter at having his own words thrown back at him, making Shane's head bob up and down. "Of course. But you will have to give me at least…" He pretended to check a watch he didn't have. "30 minutes."

Shane huffed, and poked a finger into his side. "Jesus, I didn't mean today. And 30 minutes? Really?" There was a bone-deep satiation within Shane, and he felt truly exhausted. Like he would need hours just to get up the energy to stand, never mind do *that* again.

"If you keep rubbing on me naked like that, maybe sooner."

"You're insatiable."

"I do not know this word, but yes."

Shane laughed. He could already feel a soreness radiating from his lower back, and the laugh quickly turned into a groan as he remembered that they had practice tomorrow. That wouldn't be fun. Ilya had prepped him well, but he was still bigger than anything Shane had taken before, and so there was nothing they could do about some lingering aches and pains. He was just going to have to live with a slower-than-normal pace during conditioning.

For the first time in his life when it came to something compromising his ability to play hockey, Shane couldn't help but think that it had been totally worth it.

He also couldn't help but think that he really liked cuddling. It was turning out to be a great perk of knowing one has a boyfriend.

Which reminded him. "So… you like me." It came out as more of a question than he had intended.

"Oh, what gave it away?"

"Fuck off. I mean… since when?" He still wasn't sure he *believed* it, quite frankly, and needed to put together some timeline in his mind for the sake of his own sanity. "Was it Rose's party?"

An actual, honest-to-god snort came out of Ilya. "No."

“Was it over the summer? When we called for the first time?” Shane twisted a little in Ilya’s grip to make eye contact, and found him… blushing.

“Ah… no. Was before that.”

“Holy shit.” Shane’s eyes widened, a little incredulous, but the red flush now moving up Ilya’s cheeks told him he wasn’t lying. He still couldn't help but ask, “Really?”

“Mm.” Ilya looked him in the eyes, and visibly steadied himself. “I think from the first time I met you... I knew, a little bit. No one else would do.”

The breath felt like it was punched out of Shane’s lungs. “Wait, like… in *Regina*? I thought you hated me.”

Shane remembered the conversation very well, in that freezing parking lot during a harsh prairie winter. Ilya had barely said two words to him, just enough arrogant shit-talk to piss him off. And had done it all without even taking the goddamn cigarette out of his mouth. Shane had ranted to his mom about *Rozanov, the cocky Russian kid* for basically the whole car ride back to their hotel.

“I did. Hated how perfect you were. How polite. Your freckles.”

“My freckles?”

“Mm… Couldn’t stop thinking about them.”

“Doesn’t sound like hate to me,” Shane mumbled.

“No, it was. I hated that I couldn’t get your boring voice out of my head.” Shane was about to protest when Ilya’s voice dropped a little bit, “Hated that every time I was with a woman I wished it was you.”

The words died on his tongue. “What?” Shane wasn’t proud of how awe-struck he sounded.

“Why does that surprise you? You are very pretty, Hollander.”

“Oh, fuck off.” Shane had gotten *pretty boy* a lot growing up, but the way Ilya said it never felt like an insult.

“No.” Ilya pulled him in closer, letting a finger trace ever so softly down the side of Shane’s face. “Your eyes, your lips…. the way you move, the way you smile. Everything. The back of your fucking neck. I think maybe I had… obsession.”

Shane exhaled shakily, still in a little bit of shock. “Well… if it helps I think I had a bit of an obsession, too.”

“Yeah?” The smirk was back, although made less smug by the pink cheeks framing it.

“Yeah. My mom would get mad at me for using the family computer to watch all the highlights from your team in Russia. I thought it was because you were the first person to

ever really beat me. But, I don't know… maybe there were some ulterior motives."

"What is this, *ulterior motives*?"

Shane laughed. "Look it up later." He didn't want to explain right now that even through those ancient, shitty video feeds he had always noticed the way Ilya's curls poked out from underneath his helmet. The way he moved on the ice, smooth and strong and powerful. If he was very honest with himself, 'analyzing an opponent's style of play' had maybe been an excuse for longer than he knew.

"I'm just saying I like you, too."

The quippy retort he was expecting never came. Ilya just looked at him softly, the corner of his eyes crinkling up in genuine affection.

Now, he wouldn't have to make any excuses at all. He could look and touch and take all the time in the world to just *enjoy*. And maybe they wouldn't tell anyone, not right away, at least, while everything was still so shiny and new. Maybe most people would never know anything about it at all. But Shane would know, and Ilya would know, and for right now that felt like so much more than enough.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone reading, and those leaving kudos and comments. They're seriously so appreciated!

My loyal beta Bri has made mention that my tendency for self-indulgent references is in full force this chapter. But guess what, it's my world, and in my world Shane Hollander likes Mandy Patinkin. Sue me.

Stay tuned for the final instalment! Who knows what other horrendously self-serving references I can fit in this bad boy!

Chapter 4: Say, Won't You Stay Forever?

Chapter Notes

The final chapter is here!!

Hayden finally makes an appearance, because I'd like to believe that even in a universe where he plays on the same team as Ilya they still have beef.

Thank you so much to everyone who read until the end. This is my first fic, so any comments and kudos are deeply deeply appreciated. I had a lot of fun with this. Hopefully you do too :)

Enjoy <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shane felt like he was going to throw up.

Which was not good. Despite having a pretty nervous disposition most of the time, rarely did he feel actually physically *nauseous* before a hockey game. In fact, going through the motions of pre-game rituals and routine was usually what brought him the most peace, a sense of calm that came with knowing the rink was the one place in the world where he always knew exactly what to do. And could do it better than anyone else.

But this was a stage he had never been on before. The NCAA Division 1 Championships. The 60 minutes that an entire season of hockey had been leading up to. The single game that would decide whether BU was as good of a team as the talking heads made them out to be, or if Shane Hollander would spend another summer agonizing over every penalty, every missed shot, and every wrong decision.

The pressure seemed tenfold now, compared to last year, for a multitude of reasons.

On a personal level, Shane wanted to prove he could lead as a captain, that even as a sophomore the C on his chest was well-deserved.

On a team level, BU had entered the tournament ranked #1, described as an absolute powerhouse on just about every radio show or sports network that cared enough to talk about college hockey. A reporter had used the phrase "their tournament to lose" just last month. You would think being the favourites would leave Shane with a sense of safety, but the knowledge that they *should* win only made the anxiety in his gut deepen, as he imagined the disappointment that would follow if they once again *didn't*.

The last reason was the stupidest, but their opponent in the final was Boston College. The underdog #7 rank had managed a stunning overtime win in the semis against a skilled

Michigan State team that had come into the game heavily favoured.

Anyone in Boston who gave a single shit about hockey took the rivalry seriously, and as dumb as the "Battle of Boston" always sounded to Shane's Canadian ears, over the last two years he hadn't been able to stop from buying into the intense brand of school spirit America was known for. Every time they played each other it was more intense than normal, maybe because neither school ever really had 'home ice advantage' when their campuses were five damn miles apart, or maybe because 100 years of rivalry simply did something to a team psyche. Either way, Shane didn't just want to beat BC, he wanted to fucking destroy them.

So sure, there was a combination of factors that had led to Shane's stomach coming very close to evacuating from his body as the team waited in the tunnel to take the ice again after warm-up. Their coach had given what was probably a very inspiring speech in the locker room just a moment ago, but Shane hadn't been incredibly dialed in. Too focused on keeping his breathing normal and maintaining feeling in all extremities to remember the details.

Now, he shuffled back and forth repetitively on his skates, trying to keep his head down and not appear visibly nervous to any of his teammates. He was last in line as always, which was helping, but he was their leader for fucks sake, when they got out there he needed to *lead*. He couldn't be fucking *panicking* before the biggest game of their lives-

"Into ballet now, Hollander? Dancing in the tunnel?" A familiar accent, arrogant and terribly affection-inducing, stopped Shane's runaway train of thought. He paused his anxious shuffling and looked up into hazel eyes. Eyes that were scanning over his body with a calm concern.

"Why are you here?" Ilya always led the team out of the tunnel. And denying superstition in the playoffs was a sin worse than sacrilege.

"Don't worry. I will go back when coach yells at me."

"You fucking better."

"Just wanted to see what has you skating a hole in the floor, hm?"

Damn. Shane had thought he had done a good job of hiding this flash of anxiety from the rest of the team. But he should have known. This wasn't the rest of the team, this was Ilya. "It's nothing, I've just got pre-game jitters, you know. I'll get over it when we start playing."

Ilya just looked at him flatly.

"It's the fucking *final*, Ilya, I'm nervous. Sue me." He stage-whispered, trying to keep the admission just between them. Thankfully the rest of the team was a riot of noise, trying to get themselves pumped up to take the ice.

"You are Shane fucking Hollander. Captain of #1 team. Best player in the league. Who the fuck do you have to be nervous about?"

Shane's lips twitched at the admission. "Don't you mean second best player?"

Ilya shrugged. “Scoring race is tied. Guess we will know after final.”

“Oh, so *that’s* what makes this game important?”

“Yes. Only person you have to compete with is me.”

“You are such a narcissist.”

“But is true, no?” One of Ilya’s gloved hands moved around to make gentle contact with Shane’s back. Nothing obvious, just resting on him, providing a grounding presence. “None of these fuckers can compete with you. With *us*. We will send them back to Boston crying.”

That broke a laugh out of Shane, the first one since he had woken up this morning. “We’ll be on the same plane, idiot.” The finals venue was in Detroit this year.

“Yes, we will be able to watch, it will be perfect. Maybe some of them quit hockey forever. Go to the… what is the stupid sport, with the net-sticks?"

“Lacrosse.”

“Lacrosse! The embarrassment will be that bad.”

Shane took a deep breath, trying to focus on the weight of Ilya’s hand on his back. “People were saying that when they played Michigan.”

“But Michigan does not have Shane Hollander.” The accompanying grin was cocky and so fundamentally *Ilya Rozanov* that it settled something in Shane’s stomach. “Or me.”

“Of course, how could I forget.”

Ilya leaned in closer to whisper just above Shane’s ear, in Russian, “*You’re good, sweetheart*. *We’re good*.”

Shane felt his cheeks get hot. He had been genuine about wanting to learn Russian, and for the last few months Ilya had insisted on ‘teaching him the important words first.’ Which of course included pet names and anything that could be used in a remotely sexual context. That unfortunately meant Shane now had an almost Pavlovian response to the language.

“Fucker- not now.” He shoulder-checked Ilya back a bit, who easily followed, still smiling innocently.

“What? We are the best. We will win.” He said it with such a certain finality that Shane couldn’t help but believe it. Then he winked. “And celebrate after, of course.”

Shane’s lips twitched up, valiantly trying and failing to hold back a smile. “That’s all you think about? The after-party?”

“Ah, maybe what I am thinking of is… *after*-after-party. When my captain brings me to hotel room to thank me for very sexy game-winning goal.”

“You’re gonna jinx us if you keep talking like that.” But Shane did feel more relaxed now. Ilya’s antics always managed to bring him out of his head. “And who said *I’d* be thanking *you*?”

Ilya raised an intrigued eyebrow, “Guess we will have to wait and see, *zaychik*.”

Suddenly, a tired voice came from behind Ilya. “What did I ever do to deserve this?”

The flush that had been steadily growing across Shane’s face deepened, as Hayden Pike turned to level an unimpressed glare at the two of them. Ilya’s hand still didn’t move from his lower back.

“You’re lucky the rest of the team are fucking idiots, because you’re not as subtle as you think.” Shane balked, getting ready to protest, but Hayden continued, “No, don’t even try, dude. *You* can’t see your face right now.”

“He is not wrong.” Ilya, at least, was still enjoying himself, looking down at Shane with a glint in his eyes. “You are very… responsive.”

Shane’s protests were once again cut off by a groaning Pike. “Oh my god, why do you even know that word?”

“Because I am such a good student.” The reply managed to be both sarcastic and suggestive, a tone Ilya might as well have invented.

“Don’t you have players at *that* end of the line to annoy?”

As if on cue, a faint call came from somewhere near the front. “Rozy! What the fuck are you doing down there?”

“Thank god,” Hayden sighed. Ilya just laughed, and planted an exaggerated kiss on the side of Shane’s helmet. It was something hockey players did all the time, but it still made Shane’s ears heat up. Ilya also made sure to pat Hayden just a *little* too hard on the back as he made his way to the tunnel entrance.

Before he could get entirely out of earshot, Shane stopped him. “Wait, Ilya.” And after he had turned around, he added in Russian, “*Thank you*.”

Shane knew his pronunciation was pretty bad, stumbling and childish, but still it made Ilya pause, a real smile slowly slipping onto his features. Then he gave Shane another wink, and disappeared into the front of the line.

Shane’s heart was beating a little slower now, and his hands had lost their tremor. He would be okay. Ilya was right. They were the best. They were fucking #1. They would simply go out there and prove why.

“Offer’s still on the table, you know. Jackie has a friend…”

“I’m not breaking up with him, Pike.”

“Well not *now*. We need him sharp for the finals.”

“Hayden.”

“I know. I know.” Hayden sighed, clapping Shane on the shoulder and bonking their helmets together lightly. “Let’s fucking crush ‘em, captain.”

Hayden was the only one on the team that knew they were together right now, and that hadn’t exactly been by *choice*. For some reason Ilya always seemed to annoy Hayden with particular consistency, and Hayden could never stop himself from retaliating, so the two weren’t exactly the best of friends. That had made the reveal somewhat awkward, and Hayden, while supportive of Shane’s sexuality, still hadn’t come around to being exactly *encouraging* of the relationship.

Although, Shane couldn’t find it within himself to regret that he knew. Hayden was genuinely a good friend, and it felt nice to have someone they didn’t have to pretend in front of. However, the way he found out had been… less than ideal.

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Thinking back, they hadn't been the most subtle, and Shane had maybe made some poor decisions leading up to the reveal. Ilya’s presence always seemed to lead to an exponential increase in those.

It had been in a hotel room after an away game in March, which Hayden and Shane had been sharing per usual. Hayden had said he was going out for dinner with the team to celebrate their win, to which Shane had sputtered some half-baked lie about not feeling too good, and declined the invite.

Almost before the door had shut behind him, Shane had texted Ilya his room number. His post-game tendencies certainly hadn’t improved after they got together. They had maybe even gotten worse, since now Ilya wasn’t afraid to show off directly to Shane whenever he managed some particularly nice (he would call it *sexy*) move on the ice. Nothing obvious, just a wink here or a shoulder bump there, but it was always enough to leave Shane equally annoyed and riled up.

Ilya’s knock came less than a minute after the text had been delivered, which Shane would have teased him about if he wasn’t just as desperate to get his hands on him.

“Tally’s 34 to 31 now, Rozanov. Gonna be tough to catch up,” Shane said as he opened the door, and couldn’t stop himself from smiling a little at the sight that greeted him. Ilya had clearly rushed over from the shower, clothes thrown on haphazardly and hair still damp. The odd water droplet could be seen slowly making its way down his neck, tracing a path through his moles.

“Not when I score hat trick next weekend.” As he spoke, his hands slowly reached out and ever so gently grabbed the sides of Shane’s waist. He walked forward, hands rubbing lightly over his stomach and back.

“You’re calling your shots now?” Shane let himself be walked backwards, door falling shut behind them as the back of his knees hit the bed. The light touch was already driving him crazy. “Gonna be bad if you don’t deliver.”

“Oh, I will *deliver*. You should know I always do.” He leaned in, lips ghosting over Shane’s neck, pressing kisses up into his jaw and cheek before biting lightly at his ear.

Shane tilted his head back to give him all the access he wanted, and bit his lip to stop something embarrassing from coming out. Ilya must have noticed the movement, because he grabbed his chin and pushed against his jaw with just enough pressure to force it open a little. He pressed a thumb down onto Shane’s bottom lip, who whimpered at the pressure.

“Enough. Let me hear you.” The thumb was pushed a little farther into Shane’s mouth, starting to press against his tongue. Shane’s breathing was getting heavier, and he could feel the heave of Ilya’s chest where they were pressed together. “You played so well today. You deserve a reward, don’t you think?”

Shane nodded a little desperately. He *had* played well. It made him burn red hot to think that Ilya had been watching him, been *impressed* by him. “Please.” It sounded a little garbled around the thumb in his mouth.

Ilya’s eyes darkened. Shane knew the begging turned him on, and felt good knowing that he could have so much power in just one word.

Letting go for just a second, Ilya got onto the bed and set himself up to lean back against the headboard, tugging Shane’s hand to make him follow. “I want to watch you tonight. Get on top?”

Shane flushed. His inexperience always made him feel a little awkward at requests like that, but the look in Ilya’s eyes was enough to convince him to do just about anything right now. He slowly crawled up onto his lap, relishing the groan it pulled from his lips.

“Yes, just like that.” His hands came up to steady himself on Ilya’s arms. Ilya, meanwhile, was busying his own hands with taking off his t-shirt, and then Shane’s, rubbing and squeezing at his chest as soon as it was revealed. His curiosity with that particular body part had yet to be sated.

Shane let his weight down slowly, feeling Ilya’s hands move down to wrap around his hips, squeezing hard and sending a jolt through him. He loved when Ilya got a little rough, loved the bruises and reminders it left him with the next morning.

Finally letting himself rest fully in his lap, he felt the hard outline of Ilya’s cock pressing against his ass, and groaned. Ilya pressed his face into the crook of Shane’s neck and bit down, stifling his own noises, which really wasn’t fair.

But then Ilya stilled under him, his roaming hands coming to an unceremonious stop. Shane let out a whine, and pulled back a bit to see what the problem was. Ilya's head was turned to the right, and so Shane followed his line of sight to where it had gotten stuck on the nightstand beside the bed. Where Shane's most recent read was resting, bookmark sticking out the middle… along with his glasses.

Ilya turned back slowly to face him, and the light growing in his eyes was enough to have Shane immediately on the defensive. "No."

"Yes. Please." Ilya rarely begged, so that gave Shane a second of pause. Ilya saw the opening and continued, "Will make it so good for you, sweetheart."

The rare English endearment combined with a well-timed roll of his hips had Shane swallowing back a moan. "*Ah*- Why are you even into that?"

"You don't realize how sexy you look in them."

Shane scoffed, "I don't." But Ilya's hands had started moving across his body again and he could sense his defences rapidly crumbling.

Ilya kissed his shoulder as he answered, "Mm, *you do*. Want to fuck you with them on. And nothing else."

"*Fuck*-" The retort Shane had planned turned into a gasp, as the words hit him like physical weight.

"Is not a bad picture, mm? You riding me in your pretty glasses?"

"Where are you learning this shit," Shane whispered, a little breathless.

Still, he leaned back, releasing one of his hands from where they had been wrapped tight around Ilya's neck like a lifeline, and reached over to the bedside table. He couldn't pretend any longer that this was a battle he *really* wanted to win.

With little fanfare, he grabbed his glasses and slipped them on, feeling kind of awkward at how intensely Ilya was staring at him. He didn't *feel* any sexier with them on. Just less farsighted.

But Ilya let out a groan, guttural and low, and started pressing kisses all over his face with renewed fervour. "*Fuck* Shane-" He stopped his ministrations only long enough to whisper filthy things into his skin. "So pretty just for me, mm?"

"Yes, *ah*-" Shane's agreement was cut off as Ilya squeezed his waist and ground up into him with a roll of his hips. "*Ilya*- Kiss me, please."

The words were quiet, but of course Ilya heard him. Immediately he moved his mouth up to Shane's lips, connecting them in a kiss that quickly turned filthy as they panted into each other's mouths, like sharing air was the only way to be close enough. The glasses made it a little awkward, getting pushed up the bridge of Shane's nose and pressing clumsily into his brow, but Shane didn't consider taking them off. Not if they had Ilya acting like *this*.

“They all watch you play. They all want to go home with you. But you only come back to *me*.”

More than a year ago, in a very similar hotel room, Shane had dreamt about Ilya saying something like that to him. Sometimes it was a little difficult for him to believe that he still wasn’t imagining things. But it sure felt real.

“*Mm*- Always. Just for you.” Shane whined at the feeling of Ilya biting his lip and then soothing the pain with his tongue. He couldn't stop himself from grinding down as they kissed, drinking up the noises he was pulling out of the man under him with each movement.

“What would they think, hm? *Captain* Shane Hollander, so easy for me.”

Shane moaned, and his hips stuttered. Fuck, why did that do something to him?

“You are already so hard.” Ilya smirked, and Shane could feel it against his lips. “You like that? Thinking about people watching you?”

Shane flushed. “No.” It wasn’t particularly convincing, even though he didn’t *really* want to be watched. Not in any version of reality. But he was discovering he didn’t mind the fantasy. The image of people seeing them together and knowing just how easy he was for Ilya… and how easy Ilya was for him.

“Really? I think you like to show off. Want everyone to see how *good* you are.”

“*Ah*- Shut up. I fucking don’t.” But Ilya could see how hard he was, could feel how Shane couldn’t stop his hips from bucking and eyes from squeezing shut at the words. He couldn’t hide in this position, with every reaction on full display.

“I think you could come just like this. I don’t even have to touch you.”

Shane choked back something dangerously close to a *whimper* at the words. “*No*, Ilya. Touch me.” He sounded whiny even to his own ears. “Please. I need it.”

“Need what?” Ilya knew very well, but liked making Shane say it anyways.

“You.”

Shane could feel the short intake of breath that one word dragged from Ilya. “Okay, okay. Since tonight is reward.”

But as Ilya’s hand finally moved down to his waistband, Shane heard a small *click* coming from behind him, and then the telltale sign of a door falling shut.

The sound froze them both on the spot, and when Shane turned around he was met with the wide-eyed face of Hayden Pike, standing in the entryway as if physically frozen to the spot. His jaw hung open in a way Shane would have found comic in any other circumstance.

Oh fuck.

After a one second pause that felt like an eternity, Shane's mind came back online and he scrambled off where he had been straddling Ilya, rushing to pull his shirt back on and smooth all his clothes in order as best he could. He didn't want to think about what his hair looked like, or how compromising their position had just been. Fuck, he *really* hoped his shirt was long enough to cover the tenting in his pants.

"What the fuck, Hayden?"

"What the fuck, *me*?"

"Don't you know how to knock?"

"It's my fucking room!"

"I thought I had the key, though?"

"Well clearly there's two, Shane."

"Oh my god."

"No, no, no. *You* do not get to be shocked right now." Hayden had regained control of his limbs, and pointed an accusing finger at Shane. "*You* do not get to be the one freaking out."

"I thought you went out for dinner?"

"Yeah, well, I forgot my phone so…" Hayden trailed off, as his eyes slowly wandered to where Ilya hadn't moved from the bed, as if just remembering he was also there. Still lounging shirtless on the pillows, Ilya appeared calm on the outside, but Shane could tell by the narrowed glint in his eyes he was pretty pissed at having been interrupted.

One of his hands snuck out from where they were strategically folded over his lap, giving a sarcastic little wave. "Hello, Pike."

"Don't you fucking start, Rozanov."

"What, I just say hello."

Hayden groaned, disbelieving. "Oh my god, I thought you two didn't even *like* each other."

"Well, you are not very smart, so that makes sense."

"Rozanov, I swear to god-"

"Hayden." Shane cut in, sending Ilya a quick glare. He was really not making the situation better. "I'm sorry you had to find out like this. I was going to tell you soon, honest."

"Tell me what? That you're gay? Or that you're hooking up with… him?" He flapped a hand in the rough direction of the bed, like it hurt him to even say his name. "Because honestly Shane I only take issue with one of those things."

“Um… both?” Shane winced a little at how unsure he sounded. “Just couldn't seem to… find the right moment, I guess?”

“Oh yeah, cause this moment is just perfect.”

“We *really* thought you were gone. I’m sorry.”

Hayden exhaled sharply, and ran an exasperated hand through his hair. “Okay… Okay. Jesus Christ... Wait, why are you wearing glasses?”

Shane blushed, stuttering.

“Fuck- no, actually, don’t answer that.” Hayden took a deep breath, and seemed to gather his thoughts together a bit. “I just don’t get it. Are there really no nice guys at our school? Or in the entire city of Boston?”

“Shane doesn’t like nice,” Ilya added charmingly.

The sound that Hayden made was somewhere between a cough and a gag. Shane dropped his head in his hands. “Really not helping, Ilya.”

“I’m sorry, did you just call him *Ilya*?”

“You did not deny it, though, *miliy*.”

“And *you*.” Hayden turned now to look at Rozanov. “Since fucking when?”

“What?”

“Since when do *you* like guys? I mean Shane, sure, we’ve had suspicions.” Shane made an indignant noise of protest, but was cut off immediately. “But you, I thought… all the parties, and the women?”

Ilya shrugged, unconcerned. “I am bisexual. Concept is too complex for you, maybe.”

Hayden looked as if all the blood had drained from his face, and Shane was actually a little worried he might faint. “I regret everything that’s led me to this moment.” He made a move to leave, and Shane lunged forward to stop him.

“No, no, Hayden, wait. Just… please don’t tell anyone else on the team. Please.”

Hayden must have seen something of the fear on Shane’s face because he stopped immediately, his expression softening a bit. “Shane… you know I wouldn’t do that.”

“Really?”

“Really. Haven’t you been my friend long enough to trust me? If you want to keep private things private then that’s your business. No one will hear a word from me.” Shane let out a relieved exhale. “Doesn’t mean I agree with… whatever the fuck this is, though.”

Ilya had thrown his legs over the side of the bed, but still made absolutely no move to change his current state of undress. Shane thought he probably liked how uncomfortable it was making Hayden. “Is called *dating*, Pike. I know you are probably unfamiliar.”

Hayden looked like he had been slapped by this new information. “Okay first of all, Rozanov, you’ve literally *met* Jackie, so fuck right off. Second… I’m sorry? This isn’t just a hook up? You two are… *boyfriends*?” He spat out the word as though it burned his tongue even to say.

Shane sighed. He really hadn't been mentally prepared to have any of these conversations today. Ideally, it would have been a slow trail of breadcrumbs left over a long period of time, leading up to a gentle reveal. And a certain *someone* would not have been present to make things exponentially worse.

“Yeah, Hayden. We’re dating. Ilya is… my boyfriend.” It was the first time Shane had actually said it out loud to someone else, and it made him blush. He couldn’t help but glance over at Ilya on the bed, who was unabashedly staring back. He had this small, sappy smile on his face, and for a second, they just basked in the moment. In the admittance that they really were *each other’s*.

“Oh my god.” Shane looked back at Hayden, whose gaze was moving rapidly between them, a little wildly. “Can you two stop eye-fucking while I’m in the room please? I’m gonna throw up.”

“Then you should probably leave the room.”

Ignoring Ilya’s invitation, Hayden turned back to Shane. “If only I’d have known. There were so many good guys I could have set you up with.”

“Oh no, the third line’s fifth best player does not approve of me. How will I survive?”

“Rozanov, seriously, I will kill you.”

“No, you won’t, because then you would make your friend very sad,” Ilya said, finally getting up and strolling to the entryway, lazily stretching an arm around Shane’s waist. Eyes widening slightly at the movement, Hayden found something very interesting to analyze on the carpet.

The next words he spoke were directed more at the ground than anything. “Just… please tell me this is new, at least? I mean, freshman year you two were like oil and fucking water.”

“Oil and water?” Ilya asked softly into Shane’s ear.

“Yeah, like, we fought all the time.” Shane should have shaken off the closeness, given Hayden was still very much *right* there, standing stock-still as if nailed to the floor. But at the end of the day, with Ilya’s bare chest against his back and a hand resting lightly on his waistband, he was but a weak man.

“Oh, yes. We still do. Hollander likes a *challenge*.”

The innuendo was obvious in his words, and Shane groaned. “Can you not do that right now?”

Hayden gasped as something seemed to occur to him just at that moment. “Oh my god, was the fighting some kind of fucked-up foreplay? Have you been making us all witness your sexual tension for years?”

“Absolutely.”

“No!”

There was silence, after the two answers came out at the exact same time. Shane glared at Ilya, who was clearly trying to hold back a grin.

“*No*.” He repeated, a little more forceful. “I mean, I couldn’t even admit to *myself* that I liked him until… summer after freshman year, I guess?”

“Mm.” Ilya’s smile was a little mean, and the light in his eyes turned dangerous. “But you could admit I was sexy from the beginning.”

He totally had, but felt like denial was the best option here. “I don’t remember saying that.”

“You didn’t have to.”

The absolute mass of emotions on Hayden’s face had become too complex to decipher. Shane sort of understood the feeling, and couldn't help but feel bad that they had unloaded everything on him all at once.

Then, Hayden exhaled slowly, and seemed to physically pull himself together, standing a little more upright. He looked up, making direct eye contact with Ilya over Shane’s shoulder. “I will actually kill you if you hurt him, Rozanov.”

“You couldn’t reach me, Pike.”

“Fucker-”

“And you won’t have to.” Ilya cut him off suddenly. His voice had dropped from its teasing lilt into a more earnest register. “I will be good to him. For as long as he wants me.”

Shane inhaled sharply. Seriously, where was Ilya learning this shit? The whiplash was going to kill him. He looked up, unable to stop the bright, incredulous smile from splitting open his face, and his next words came out like a whisper, “That’s my line, asshole.”

“... Okay, now that’s *really* my cue.” Hayden shook his head, but the horror and shock had bled just a little from his face, morphing into something that could generously be called reluctant acceptance. “Just warn me next time you have a guest over, Shane. I could do without *that* image again for the rest of my life.”

Shane couldn’t help but laugh at his use of the word ‘guest.’ Not all hope had been given up concerning a future change in boyfriends, apparently. “Of course, Hayden. And… thank you.

Again."

With one last glance, and something unintelligible muttered under his breath about *fucking Rozanov, of all people*, Hayden pushed open the door and let it swing shut behind him.

Ilya broke the few seconds of silence that enveloped them. "That went well, I think."

"You're a fucking idiot." But the sting was dulled by the fact that he immediately reached up to haul Ilya back down to meet his lips. Both of them were smiling a little too hard for it to really work, and his glasses were still kind of in the way, but Shane thought it might have been the best kiss he'd ever had.

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The game started on a high.

After Shane had calmed the fuck down and been reminded of exactly who he was, it hadn't taken him long to adjust to the heightened stakes and energy. He was surrounded by a team he trusted, playing the game he loved, his parents watching from somewhere in the stands just like they had when he was six years old.

He would not be taken out by something as pathetic as a little extra pressure. He had a fucking scoring race to win.

And twelve minutes into the game, Shane Hollander would be the first player in the National Championships to find the back of the net, on a goal assisted by none other than Ilya Rozanov, who had come out to play wing on a power play. It was pure elation, the feeling of putting his team ahead on the biggest stage, of hearing the crowd roar behind him, and the horns blare. It was a feeling he would never get sick of. But there was also lots of game left to play.

So, he shot Ilya a little 'nice assist,' had his moment of euphoria, and then quickly came back down to earth. Mind strictly focused on the next one.

But the second period passed by scoreless. BU fought hard to pull further ahead and BC fought hard to even out the scoreboard, but neither to any avail. Both teams had taken some stupid penalties, but both teams also had goalies putting on phenomenal performances. And BU still had the lead. If they just played defensively for the last 20 minutes, as long as they could keep the shutout going, they would win. Even if it wouldn't be pretty.

But Shane didn't *really* want that. He wanted more than to squeak out a close victory.

Clearly so did Ilya, who had taken the second intermission to share some choice words (calling it a speech would be generous) with the team. He commanded the locker room like a war general, yelling various obscenities at various deserving parties that somehow, in a way only Rozanov could accomplish, managed to come across as motivational.

Shane, because he was a consummate professional, resolutely refused to be turned on by the authoritative tone, but might have made a mental note to bring it up later.

Borderline bullying or not, Ilya's chat worked fucking wonders. The team got back on the ice to start the third with fire in their eyes and potent, provocative words still lingering in their ears.

It helped that just over one minute into the third period, after a turnover in the neutral zone, Ilya Rozanov buried the second goal of the game, behind a goalie who had no time to see the puck until it was well behind him. His celebration was significantly louder than Shane's had been, including a dramatic jump into the boards that had fans on the other side banging the glass hard enough it could have broken. Shane would have rolled his eyes, but he was screaming just as loud on the bench.

The floodgates were open after that. JJ put one away barely two minutes after, slashing at a rebound enough times to eventually get it shoved under the right pad and just over the line. Not the prettiest, but they all counted for the same.

Then, on another power play seven minutes later, Ilya scored *again*, putting BU thoroughly out of reach and possibly even into blowout territory. It was glorious. Shane reveled in the dramatic difference in energy, as half of the crowd jumped and chanted loudly, and the other half sat quietly, shocked into a depressed silence.

He also reveled in watching his asshole of a boyfriend celebrate directly in front of the opposing team's bench, in a move that was probably a half-step away from getting him an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. But he couldn't even bring out his Captain Voice to get on his ass about it, because Ilya had just scored twice in the championship game, and it was fucking *hot*, okay? He was only human.

An empty netter in the last minute had the scoreboard flashing a giant, glaringly red 5-0. Not just a win. An annihilation.

Soon after, the final horn went off, and the team flooded onto the ice. Sticks were thrown down and gloves and helmets flew high into the air, raining back down upon them like confetti. The smoke cannons went off, the horn kept blaring, and the first arms Shane felt around him were so very familiar.

To an outside observer, the 2010 NCAA Division 1 National Championships were perhaps not particularly memorable. There was no last-second overtime winner for ESPN to replay a thousand times, no dramatic comeback, no bench-clearing brawl, and no Cinderella story for the underdogs. It was, for most casual viewers, a pretty standard hockey game, where the team that was expected to win, won.

For Shane Hollander, it was the best day of his life. Both for obvious reasons that anyone could imagine, and for one reason that happened only loud enough for him to hear.

Floating in the joy of celebration, Shane returned Ilya's embrace eagerly, face wide and open in a genuine smile. Ilya was glowing, flushed with exertion, and the bright white of the ice reflected light into his eyes, making them just… radiant. Green meadows and pure gold. Like

everyone, he had thrown his helmet off at the end of the game, and so his curls bounced and fell freely in all directions, frizzy from sweat and achingly beautiful.

He wrapped his arms firmly around Shane, lifting him entirely off the ice, and Shane wished he could freeze that moment and bask in it forever. Unfortunately, he had in reality about two seconds of basking before both of them were smushed against the boards by the stampeding hoard that was the rest of the team.

It was sweaty, loud, more than a little painful, and Shane could do nothing but huff out wheezing, half-suffocated laughter. It was absolutely wonderful.

Crushed by his teammates and enveloped in a pair of strong, familiar arms, Shane's breath caught as he felt Ilya press a kiss to his cheek. They were both panting for air and getting jostled aggressively by the celebrations of their team, but could only bother looking at each other.

"Fuck, I love you." Though the words were barely a whisper, Shane heard them clearly from where he was pressed right up against Ilya's chest.

His eyes widened.

He was still being shoved around in a sea of hockey players, held tightly in Ilya's arms, but everything seemed to move in slow motion for just that second. *Wait, had he heard that right?*

All the confirmation he needed he found in Ilya's face. His eyes had also gone a little big, panicked like he maybe hadn't meant to say that out loud. Shane didn't want to see that hint of fear in his eyes any longer, not when his own heart felt like it was soaring out of his chest. Not when they had just won the fucking championships. Not when the man he loved loved him *back*.

"Holy shit." He laughed, bright and euphoric. And said, just loud enough to be heard over roaring fans and screaming teammates, "I love you too."

Later, when the immediate celebration had died down and they were back in the locker room, Shane would get ribbed endlessly for how emotional he had gotten on the ice. Their normally stoic captain, all glassy-eyed and sniffling, made for an easy target. The chirping would only stop after the team locked onto a new victim, having gotten a hold of pictures showing Ilya Rozanov celebrating with tears streaking down his cheek.

Shane thought maybe he would tell them all, one day. The words that had really inspired that reaction. But for now, he just held it tight to his chest, warm and safe in the knowledge that it was something precious just for them.

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On the way to dinner later, Shane found time to complain.

“I can’t believe you beat me to it.”

“Mm, beat you in the scoring race, too.”

“By *one*.”

“A very nice one.”

Shane couldn’t argue against that. “But, *technically* the game-winning goal was mine, so…”

“Ah, so Hollander wants me to *thank* him tonight?” Ilya’s grin widened, and if they weren’t in a very public place right now Shane would kiss it off him.

“Maybe.”

“I don’t know…” Ilya rubbed at his back and dramatically winced. “I am so tired from being best player and scoring so much. Maybe I need massage first.”

Shane played along. “Oh? Then I’m sure you can find a spa nearby.”

“No, no, massage person must have very strong hands. Must be athlete, I think.”

“Wow, so many demands.”

“Mm, I am very demanding.”

“Also they're called a *masseuse*.”

Ilya scoffed, but his eyes were fond. “I hate you.”

“No you don’t.” *He loves me*, Shane thought.

The rest of April was a flurry of studying and final exams, and most importantly celebrating being the best college hockey team in America.

Shane *really* liked the celebrating part. Not the drinking or the partying, or anything like that. It was just that if he thought post-win sex had been good before, he clearly hadn’t understood that there were levels to these things. And a new level *had* been discovered.

Today, though, Ilya had joined Shane on a trip to the rink, allowing his poor dorm mattress and even poorer neighbours a much needed break. There was a decently long rest period scheduled in the wake of their victory, but both of them felt a little jittery if they went too long without chucking a puck around. They hadn’t bothered with pads or anything, just threw

on their skates and headed out, competing to see who could come up with the stupidest trick shot and other such meaningless challenges that inevitably turned more intense than anticipated.

The day had an air of lightness, but also a looming tension that seemed to hide just out of eyesight. Exams were almost over, and it would only be a week or so before Shane went back home for the summer. He had been meaning to ask Ilya something about that, actually, but had sort of worked himself up about it and left it until the very last minute.

He figured he had to do it now, or he wouldn't do it at all.

After burying a particularly nice wrist shot top-shelf, he cleared his throat and skated closer to Ilya.

“So… Will you go back to Russia? This summer?” Shane might not know every detail, but he could tell that Ilya’s relationship with his father was severely strained. He didn’t seem to like his brother much either, and Shane hated the idea of Ilya spending months with a family who didn’t treat him well. Who didn’t appreciate him.

Who wouldn't love him like he deserved to be loved.

Ilya shrugged. “I will need to go back for a bit, I think. Couple weeks, at least, to show my face.”

“Ah, that makes sense.” He hummed, tapping his stick in a nervous rhythm on the ice. “And after that? Would you come back to Boston?”

“Probably. I have apartment for full year, so.”

“Right, of course. It must be lonely, though, with everyone gone home.” Ilya just shrugged again, picking the puck out of the back of the net and scooping it onto his stick. He flipped it up and down on the blade a few times before Shane continued, “Is there… somewhere else you’d want to go?”

Ilya raised an unimpressed eyebrow at Shane’s vague line of questioning, “Spit it out, Hollander.”

“It’s just… my parent’s house has a guest bedroom. In Ottawa. And I don’t want to like, overstep, or anything, I just thought if you didn’t want to spend the whole summer here, maybe…” He took a moment to steel himself. “Maybe, you could come stay with me?”

Ilya’s eyes widened a bit, and he came to a stop by the benches. The puck dropped, forgotten, from his stick, and Shane braced for a rejection. For the confirmation that this was too much, too fast, that he was being insane-

“Really?” The response was surprisingly quiet. “You’d want that?”

“Yeah, of course.” Shane skated to a stop beside him, leaning on the boards in a faux display of nonchalance that he didn’t really feel.

Ilya's eyes were still a little disbelieving, but his mouth twitched up. "And your parents will think I am just very good, very handsome Russian friend?"

"No," Shane laughed softly. He was a bad liar and his parents knew him too well. There was no chance he could exist in the same vicinity as them *with* Ilya for any period of time without someone catching on. His mom would probably pick up on it within minutes. "I'd tell them."

Ilya *really* looked surprised now. "Oh."

"No pressure, of course!" Shane gestured with his hands nervously. "I know it's… a lot."

"No, no, is good-"

"You totally don't have to, obviously-"

"Shane." Ilya's hand came out to stop his. The anxious movements died down immediately and he softened at the feel of Ilya's thumb tracing gentle patterns into his palm. "I want to."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah." He tilted his head casually, but Shane could see his lips pulling up at the corners. "Want to see your room with terrible posters, and boring river you always talk about."

Shane scoffed, but a stupid smile grew on his face to mirror Ilya's. "It's a canal, actually."

"Oh, well that makes it much more exciting."

"You can skate on it in the winter."

"But it will be summer."

"Okay, so we can swim."

Ilya wriggled his eyebrows suggestively. "Trying to get me naked already, Hollander?"

Shane rolled his eyes. "As if you need an excuse to take your shirt off."

Then the gravity of the situation sort of hit him. *Holy shit. Ilya said yes.*

He was going to see Ilya in his hometown, in his childhood *bedroom*. He was going to introduce him to his parents, and take him to the places that he grew up around, old restaurants and shitty malls and tourist traps. Ilya Rozanov was going to exist in the same space as Shane Hollander's memories, and they would make new ones there. And wasn't that something to think about.

"Hey. Okay?" Ilya must have seen a flash of something in Shane's eyes.

"Okay. *Really* okay." Shane hadn't realized what that image would do to his heart. "Just… excited."

"Excited, hm?"

“Oh my god, not like that. Excited to show you around.”

“Of course.”

“I meant what I said about the guest bedroom, you know.”

“Yes. We will spend all summer sleeping very far away, I’m sure.”

“We will, because my *parents* will also be there.”

“Don’t worry, mothers love me very much.”

Shane ignored the joke. “They both will. My parents, I mean.” He couldn’t imagine a world where they didn’t. “They’ll love you.”

Ilya went quiet, and didn’t respond. Maybe he didn’t know how. Shane felt the need to expand.

“My mom will talk your ear off about hockey. She’s seriously too invested, but if it gets too much you can tune her out and she’ll find a new victim. And my dad played in uni, too, but he’d probably rather ask you about, like, the quality of our dining hall food, or how Boston winter compares to Russia, or something.” Shane laughed, thinking of the absurd image of his father having an extended conversation with Ilya Rozanov, and how that absurdity was now going to become a reality. “But really, they’ll love you. Because they love me… and you make me happy.”

It wasn’t the most embarrassing thing he’d ever said to Ilya, but it was maybe close.

Ilya, thankfully, didn’t make fun of him for the admission. In fact, if Shane wasn’t totally imagining things, the corner of his eyes were even getting a little… watery.

He turned away before Shane could confirm this assessment, but he used a gentle hand on Ilya’s chin to guide him back around to face him. A single tear had slipped out, and was making its way uninterrupted down his cheek. “Hey…”

Ilya leaned forward, cutting off whatever Shane was going to say with a kiss. Just a firm press of lips together, and nothing more. After a few seconds, he leaned back to whisper, in Russian, “*I love you*."

Shane smiled. Ilya couldn’t hide his sappiness behind a foreign language anymore. He repeated back to him, notably worse, “*I love you too.*”

They stared into each other’s eyes for a long moment. Shane’s thumb came out to gently wipe the tear away.

“We will work on accent this summer.”

“Oh, fuck off.”

It ended up being the best summer of Shane's life. He hoped of Ilya's, too. Maybe he'd get up the nerve to ask one day. Or, they'd have countless more just like it, and the memory would simply become one of many summers spent with the person he loved.

By the end of July, a new picture had even been added to Shane's room, to join the faces of Crosby and Alfredsson. This one was framed, though, and rested on the table beside his bed.

In it, two boys sat in the stands of a baseball game. They wore matching Blue Jays caps, one white and one blue. The boy with blond curls had turned his hat backwards so he could press a kiss to the other's cheek, which was sun-kissed and covered in freckles. The other boy seemed embarrassed by the affectionate gesture, but was smiling shyly and had raised his arm to take the picture anyways.

It made the room a little less boring, Shane had been told.

Chapter End Notes

And that's all she wrote!

I'd like to give my official apologies here to Boston College for rewriting their 2010 championship and attributing it to their arch rivals. Don't think the BC hockey fan community has tons of crossover with the HR fanfiction reader community, but you know. Just in case. Sorry.

Also, my opinion as author is that Yuna Hollander fully clocked these boys from the stands during the post-championship celebration, and is thus completely unsurprised when Shane shows up for summer vacay with a Russian boyfriend in tow. They hit up Timmy's on the way home from the airport and drive into the sunset.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!