

Conversations on Christmas

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Conversations on Christmas

by [thehoneydoll](#)

Summary

Inhale. Exhale.

Inhale—

He smells it, then. Thick and acrid, staining the back of his tongue in the taste of second-hand smoke. His eyes open, watering as he hacks a deep-seated cough. He scans the rooftop, wondering *what the fuck is on fire* when he sees him—cast in shadows, face half illuminated from the glow of the city below them and a cigarette dangling from his plush mouth.

Ilya Rozanov.

OR: the Christmas Party fic

Notes

this is baby's first mlm smut so if u hate it dont tell me I WILL cry and make it everyone's problem.

if ur looking for accurate hockey schedules in this christmas one shot, stop :) thank u for ur understanding at this time

happy holidays :)

xoxo honey

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

Conversations on Christmas is a story told over eight years; with eight National Hockey League Christmas parties taking place. It begins with two young boys and ends with two grown men. It begins at nineteen; it ends at twenty seven.

The first is in:

2009

The party is in full swing by the time Shane seeks solace on the rooftop; champagne flutes bubbling and hors d'oeuvres passed from plate to palm as the staff shift between bodies with trays held high. Around the venue, wreaths twinkle with lights—garlands and ribbons are strung from every surface, and in the center of the hall sits a towering tree that permeates the room with the slight scent of sap and pine. Voices echo off the walls, the sounds of laughter and conversation pressing in on him from all sides.

It should be fun; should be a night where he chats with players and sponsors and sneaks drinks he's barely old enough to have from the trays of unsuspecting waitstaff. Should end the night full to bursting from food, fizz, and festivities.

Instead, he's here—hiding away from it all. Above him, the stars twinkle as though in laughter. Like even they find it funny that he can't seem to last an hour at the league's annual Christmas party. Something akin to shame burns in his belly and Shane closes his eyes, focusing on his breathing as he fights for control.

Inhale. Exhale.

Inhale. Exhale.

Inhale—

He smells it, then. Thick and acrid, staining the back of his tongue in the taste of second-hand smoke. His eyes open, watering as he hacks a deep-seated cough. He scans the rooftop, wondering *what the fuck is on fire* when he sees him—cast in shadows, face half illuminated from the glow of the city below them and a cigarette dangling from his plush mouth.

Ilya Rozanov.

He sits atop the ledge of the building, back to the wall and one leg bent on the bricks beneath him. His mouth curls up into a smirk, the end of his cigarette glowing like a beacon, drawing Shane in like a moth to a flame. He wants to stop staring; *fuck, I need to stop staring*. Honestly, he just needs to fucking *say something* so he doesn't look so *odd*. But in truth, he *is* odd, and it shows in the silence that stretches between them and chokes the air from Shane's lungs.

"You want?" Rozanov finally says, breaking the quiet in a hushed voice that somehow carries over to where Shane stands nearly shaking. His voice is soft, accent somehow still molasses-thick in those two words that hang between them like the cigarette he pulls from his mouth and holds out to Shane.

"Oh. Uh, no." Shane's own words come out more hoarse than he'd intended. He clears his throat and his mind moves before his mouth can stop the flow of words. "They're really bad for you, actually."

Idiot, fucking stupid—

Rozanov's mouth shifts from a smirk to a full on smile, teeth on display in a way that feels somehow blinding despite the night. Laughter is evident in the twinkle of moonlight against the white of his canines, but somehow it doesn't chafe the way the stars had—like even though he's laughing at him, somehow he's laughing with him.

"Yes, I know this," he says. Still, he places the cigarette back between his teeth and the end brightens as he takes a drag. His eyes feel like a brand as he takes in Shane's outfit—from the shine of his dress shoes to the knot of his tie. His gaze doesn't waver as he nods his head towards the stairwell and asks, "not having fun?"

"I am," Shane lies, then regrets it. He lets out a sigh and rubs at the back of his neck. "At least, I should be, right?"

Rozanov seems to consider this for a moment, his head tipping back to rest against the wall behind him, throat working over a swallow that makes his Adam's apple bob. Shane's eyes subconsciously follow the movement, latching onto the way his skin shifts before he forces his eyes away.

Too much danger; too close to the things he's never admitted to himself, let alone another person.

"Is just excuse for league to show off shiny toys," Rozanov finally says, drawing Shane's eyes back to his as he pulls another drag from his cigarette. Smoke billows from his nose as he exhales, making him look almost mythical as the tendrils curl around his face. "Not much fun to be had in that unless you enjoy being toy."

Something tugs uncomfortably in Shane's chest, an unfamiliar feeling of awareness that makes him shiver in the warm Las Vegas air. It makes him feel exposed, raw and open in a way he doesn't like. It makes him wary; makes him turn tail and run.

"I should get back," he says. When Rozanov neither speaks nor moves, he awkwardly adds, "I guess I'll be seeing you around?"

"Yes," Rozanov says, the word rolling off his tongue, smooth like honey despite the jab that follows. "Assuming your little team makes it far enough to play us again."

Fucking asshole.

"We will." Shane says the words like a fact—a truth they both know will come to fruition. He feels more solid now, a clear line in the sand between them once more that stabilizes the uncertainty that had roiled within him only moments before. It makes his voice steady as he adds, "Merry Christmas, Rozanov."

Rozanov inclines his head, eyes still fixed on Shane, heavy gaze tracking his movements towards the door through long lashes. It's only once Shane has finally pulled the door open that his response carries quietly over the space between them.

“Merry Christmas, Hollander.”

2010

Another party—this one in the heart of New York City at a high-rise hotel that stretches up towards the heavens. Shane likes that, here, it feels more like Christmas. Outside the windows that stretch from floor to ceiling, snow falls in small flakes that drift in the chilly breeze that fogs up the glass and makes everything look hazy and surreal. It reminds him of home; Canadian winters full of soft snowbanks and sherpa-lined jackets that just barely cut the chill away from the bone.

Tonight, though, coats are checked at the door and the scent of cloying perfume and heady aftershave intermingle into something vaguely nauseating. Shane's eyes travel over expensive tuxedos and dresses with price tags sure to stun as his eyes *seek*—searching for trouble, for a lit cigarette in a room full of tinder waiting to burn.

He's looking for *him*.

He tries to hold out, to let his desire to see his rival beat out the discomfort of the *shiny toy showcase*. But soon it becomes too much; the noise, the smells, the lights that seem too-bright as his panic starts to rise. Shane barely makes it through the opening speeches and celebratory toast before he slinks down an empty hallway and finds a door labeled *STAIRWELL*. He quickly shuts himself inside, taking desperate lungfuls of air that don't smell like bottled gardenias or body odor.

It's then that he notices the haze of smoke. His heart sets a pounding beat in the cage of his ribs; he knows the smell in his nose—knows the source before he sees the head of blonde curls facing away from him, his body perched atop the middle stair in a tux that fits him to perfection.

Ilya Rozanov turns his head, peeking up at Shane from under thick, dark lashes that he's felt brush the skin of his belly. A cigarette dangles from his mouth and Shane feels shock outweigh the sharp zip of awareness up his spine at the sight of him.

"You can't smoke in here," he says, voice scolding. Rozanov rolls his eyes—doesn't move to stub the cigarette out despite Shane's tone.

"I know this, mister policeman. Will you arrest me anyway?"

"That's not funny," Shane retorts, face going hot. "We could both get in a ton of trouble if someone sees."

Rozanov studies him quietly, the sharp slant of his jaw tight as his teeth clench. Finally, he pulls the cigarette from his mouth and puts it out beneath the sole of his leather dress shoe. He rises, righting his tux before stepping up to the landing where Shane still stands.

"You are much less boring with cock in your mouth," Rozanov finally says.

Flashes burst across his mind—of sudsy-slick skin amidst the steam of communal showers, of *this is a bad idea* in a hotel room meant for one but shared by two.

“Fuck you,” Shane answers. His face is on fire, heat stained like wine in the apples of his cheeks and the tips of his ears.

“Is true,” Rozanov says with a shrug, unperturbed as his fingers come up and grip the skin of Shane’s chin. He gives a slight tug, looking enraptured as Shane’s lips part and his tongue darts out to lick at the dry skin of his bottom lip. “Your mouth is *so* much better when you aren’t using it to speak.” Then, thoughtfully, he adds, “although, perhaps not always true.”

“Yeah?” Shane asks, voice barely above a whisper in the scant space Rozanov has left between them. Nearly whimpers when he leans even closer, their mouths almost brushing.

“Yes,” Rozanov breathes, voice just as hushed as he slants his head to the side and slips his nose up the slope of Shane’s own. His lips trail over lid and lash until his mouth finds the shell of Shane’s ear and he finally adds, “I like when you use your mouth to beg. So pretty when you want to come.”

Shane feels it like a gravitational pull—every muscle in his body pulling him further into Rozanov’s orbit. It takes everything not to give into it; takes the sobering thought of *anyone could see* to pull him back a few steps.

“I should, uh, get back.” It’s lame—*boring, just like he always says*—but it’s true. Somewhere in the extravagant hall of the venue, his parents sit socializing, probably checking clocks and wondering where he’d run off to. He takes another half step back, and for a moment, Rozanov sways forward like he intends to follow. But he doesn’t, and for that Shane isn’t sure if he’s relieved or disappointed. “Um, Merry Christmas.”

Then he’s gone before Rozanov can respond.

2011

LILY: *Are you still ignoring me?*

Shane is—though he'd never admit as much out loud. It feels too petulant; too whiny when nothing had come from the kiss except his own boundaries being pushed too far. He feels ridiculous for holding onto it; even more so when his phone vibrates again and he looks down to see a new message appear.

LILY: *It was a kiss, Hollander. No one saw. You can stop pretending you don't want to fuck me.*

He slips the phone back into his pocket and a flute of champagne from one of the trays that drift by, perched carefully on the waitstaff's wrist as they move expertly amongst the crowd. This year, they're in California—L.A., to be specific—and Shane can't get over the weather. Even more balmy and temperate than Las Vegas had been his first year attending this event. Palm trees sway in the pleasant breeze that drifts in towards the heart of the city from the port and makes it feel like *summer*. Like fall had never arrived in Montreal and turned the maple boughs bare with the looming promise of winter; like it was all a figment of his imagination and summer is still in full swing.

Another buzz in his pocket, and he pulls it out with a pounding heart.

LILY: *If you get tired of being a big boring baby, I'm in the alleyway out back.*

LILY: *Doing your favorite thing, smoking a cigarette. I know how much you love that.*

He thinks about it for a moment; really considers shedding the grudge he's held for months now—since the kiss on the rooftop of the MLH Awards and the anger he'd let bubble up to the surface. Because anyone could have seen; because he'd thought they could have *been something*. Then, he considers joining him. Thinks about warm L.A. air blowing through his hair instead of the stuffy, overly perfumed air of the event hall.

But then he remembers last Christmas, stolen stairwell moments where gravity had tugged him into his rival instead of the ground—had pulled him towards something *he couldn't allow himself to want*.

JANE: *No. Merry Christmas, I'll see you at the next match.*

Then he slips his phone back into his suit coat and tries to root himself in the party around him—merriment and the soft sound of music drifting towards him as he tells himself that he doesn't need to concern himself with Ilya Rozanov any further for the night.

2012

LILY: *Merry Christmas, Jane.*

He isn't here tonight, and for a moment Shane wonders if he's partly to blame. If the unanswered texts and constant no's had worn down the fun of what they were doing when no one was around to see. If maybe Rozanov is right about him—maybe Shane really *is* boring.

But his mom is walking towards him, her smile wide and warm as she takes him in. It makes something like shame burn in his belly at the secrets he keeps. Makes his reply short, desperate to slip his phone back into the safety of his pocket.

JANE: *You too, Lily.*

Then he lets his mother sweep him back towards the crowds that await him; desperate for smiles and small talk with Montreal's captain who'd rather be anywhere but here.

2013

He's not looking for him. *He isn't*. He also isn't in his nicest suit, neatly pressed in preparation of seeing him again tonight.

Admittedly, it's Shane's *second* nicest suit, but that isn't the *point*.

The point is that he hasn't seen Ilya Rozanov in seventy-three days. Hasn't seen him since he'd left the stairwell of Shane's apartment building, sealed with a kiss that had left Shane wondering *what comes next*?

Apparently, nothing came next. Just hockey, practice, and sleep. Over and over until he wondered if the concept of *giving one's virginity* only meant something to the old-fashioned, the romantics, and apparently *him*.

But still, he'd shined his shoes to perfection this morning and had combed pomade through his hair until it sat just right. Had wanted to look his best and had pretended it was to impress the sponsors. Had told his mother that he wanted to make a good impression—like his rivalry with Rozanov hadn't brought more dollars to the league than he could imagine.

"Fuck, it's cold," a familiar voice quips from beside him, making Shane's head nearly whip off his shoulders as he turns to see Rozanov striding up to him. With the bar at their back and two stools between them, it almost looks like they're not talking—like they're merely within proximity of each other, out of reach but not out of earshot. Almost out of talking range.

Almost.

"Aren't you used to this kind of weather in Moscow?" Shane asks, hiding a grin in the sip he takes from his glass when Rozanov snorts derisively.

"Colorado cold is different. Maybe the elevation? I'm not really sure." He shrugs, leaning back against the bar and looking down at the clear liquid in his cup—liquor of some kind, surely. "All I know is my balls are going to freeze off by the end of the night."

It takes Shane by surprise, forcing a laugh from him that echoes in the empty space around them. His eyes flit, wondering *where are the eyes, who heard that, who knows what's going on between us*? But it's just the two of them and a quiet bar for the moment.

"Wow," Rozanov starts, his eyes dancing in the low light with mirth. "Mister Robot laughs. I had no idea you had a sense of humor."

"You know, I've been told I'm secretly very funny," he quips back. Rozanov merely brushes the comment off with a shake of his head and the tilt of his lips.

"Your mother does not count, she's obligated to tell you that you're wonderful." Then, when Shane merely takes another sip from his glass, Rozanov continues. "You look very pretty tonight."

“You mean handsome?” Shane asks, thinking it’s a translation issue.

“No,” Rozanov shakes his head again. “I meant what I said. Your hair is done, your shoes look shiny. Someone looks like he got all dolled up to rub elbows with the big wigs.”

I got dolled up for you, Shane thinks, then pushes the thought down as quickly as it’d come. He clears his throat, his eyes scanning the room once more as people drift from one spot to another, mixing and mingling but still a good distance away from them.

“I wanted to make a good impression. The Olympics are right around the corner and there are a lot of important people here tonight.” *God, so boring.*

“Boring,” Rozanov drolls, almost like he’d plucked it straight from Shane’s own head. Then, he looks around—checking. Verifying they’re well and truly alone before he turns back to Shane with a hushed, low voice that makes Shane’s belly burn. “Would you like to visit Room 2481 tonight? *Hm?* Maybe we can make you do that *good* little trick again.”

Shane’s heart hammers behind his ribs, his eyes flickering around the room once more—seeing danger in every shadowy corner. Still, he licks his lips when he finds no one and murmurs back.

“The one with my mouth or...?”

Rozanov sucks in a surprised breath—*he likes this*, Shane realizes. *Likes me dirty-mouthed and filthy.*

“How about I tell you what I mean when I make you do it over and over again tonight?” Rozanov’s eyes are full of promise—full of sex and sin and Shane wants *so* desperately to say yes.

“I can’t,” he says glumly instead. “We didn’t confirm we were coming until last minute because we thought this overlapped with a Rolex event. I’m stuck sharing a room with my parents tonight.”

Rozanov’s face pulls into a frown but quickly smooths out into a perfectly polite smile. Shane turns to see his mother breaking away from a small circle and making her way towards them.

“Ilya Rozanov,” Shane’s mother says, face carefully guarded as she steps up beside Shane and takes the other man in. “I hope you’re having a lovely time.”

“I am, thank you.” His reply is short, but his tone is just as unassuming as his smile. “You too, I hope?”

“Colder than I expected, but I guess that’s what Colorado winters are all about.” She lets out a small, strained laugh and then turns to Shane. “Ready to head up?”

He nods, turning to place his glass on the mahogany wood of the bar behind him as his mother loops her arm through his.

“It was lovely to see you tonight, Ilya. Merry Christmas,” she says, before tugging Shane away.

Later, long after his father’s soft snores fill the room from the next bed over, he’ll realize that *he didn’t say it too*. Merry Christmas, that is. He’ll think to text him, Lily’s number practically burned into his brain by now, but sleep drags him under before he can move.

When he wakes the day is new and the words are forgotten, slipping between his fingertips like the sands of time—another year down, but how many more to go?

2014

LILY: *You here?*

Shane's nose is stuffy, his head hazy like tissue cotton—foggy with sick as he types a response back.

JANE: *No, down and out with the flu.*

LILY: *Shame. I hear nine inches down your throat helps the sinuses.*

LILY: *Guess we'll never know.*

JANE: *Rain check?*

LILY: *Rain check.*

LILY: *Merry Christmas, Hollander.*

JANE: *Merry Christmas, Rozanov.*

Shane puts his phone back down on the bed, a grin on his mouth and a tug in his chest that he chalks up to illness before he drifts back into a fevered sleep.

2015

Of all the years of parties, people, and pretending, Shane thinks this year might just be his favorite.

It isn't because he suddenly enjoys the horse and pony show; it isn't even because the weather in Florida is perfect—not too humid, not too chilly. Instead, it's the routine of *them* that has worn a drag path through the rhythms and routines of his life. Across a ballroom decorated to the nines, Ilya sits chatting with sponsors, a lighthouse calling Shane towards the one thing that has begun to feel like home.

Usually, Shane's quick to run. Quick to find solace in quiet corners and dark stairwells. But tonight, their eye contact becomes a game—how far can we push without getting caught? How much before it's too much? *Watch, hold, shift away*—over and over until it feels like a dance, the steps instinctive.

They don't cross paths until the event has shifted, liquor-soaked into the pores of everyone around him while he nurses a ginger ale. It's brief; fingers brush the back of his hand, a familiar voice murmurs in his ear—*penthouse, one hour*—then he's gone and the dance begins anew.

He counts the minutes out by seconds—*one Mississippi, two Mississippi*—his eyes so fixed on the clock that he knows he's grown dull. His conversations dwindle down like the candles that flicker on tables in their jars. He counts and converses and *waits*, until finally he excuses himself for the night and heads for the elevator.

Up, up, up it goes, floor by floor until he's finally at the penthouse suite. He knocks at the door, and immediately it opens, the practiced ritual of *knock, open, close, lock* effortlessly familiar between the two of them after all these years. Shane takes in the room, extravagant without being overly gauche—dollar signs practically dripping from the linens but the tags missing.

"Nice room," he says when the silence stretches on for too long. He walks towards the bed and sits down on the edge of it, springs bouncing lightly beneath his weight as he watches Ilya assess him with intense eyes. "Did you spring for this or did a sponsor?"

"Sponsor," Ilya answers, his gaze still heavy and intent on Shane as he stands, half in shadow, by the door. "It's nice, but I'm used to sharing rooms with teammates. I'm not so... *picky*."

"Are you calling yourself easy?" Shane quips, feeling playful despite the long night of socializing. Ilya huffs a laugh through his nose, more air than sound, and—*finally*—steps forward to stand between Shane's knees. His fingers trail up over the skin of Shane's arm, squeezing his trapezius muscle with enough force to make Shane exhale shakily.

"*You* are easy," Ilya says with a smirk, fingers ghosting over the tender skin of Shane's throat. When Shane sighs a needy breath, Ilya's smirk deepens into a full grin. "Look at you. A few touches and you'd do anything for me... wouldn't you?"

Fingers on his cheek, thumb stroking across his lower lip and then pressing into his mouth—control in the press of his finger on Shane’s tongue. Still, he nods; wants Ilya to know that here, now, he’s right. Shane *would* do anything.

“Mm,” Ilya hums, pleased. Then, “good. Show me.”

Shane lets his cheeks hollow out; lets his eyes shut as he *sucks*—a promise, a *see how good I can be?*

“*Krasivyy*,” Ilya murmurs. Pulls his hand back and sets to work on the zip of his pants, pulling out a cock that’s long and hard and throbbing. “Now, remind me why I love that mouth.”

Shane would never admit to it out loud, but this is his favorite. He likes the drag of Ilya’s cock against his tongue and the feel of his racing heart beneath Shane’s palm as he stretches a hand up over his chest. Likes the moans and praises that leave Ilya’s mouth as he gives him *everything*.

Good... Da, like that...

Love when you choke on it...

Eyes on me... Want to see those pretty tears...

You fucking love this, don't you?

Fuck—he *does*.

By the time Ilya presses him back into the mattress, Shane’s hard and desperate. Hates the way Ilya reads him so well—knows *him* so well—because he murmurs *relax, I’ll make it good for you, I always do*.

The first stretch feels mind numbing; the first slide of his cock inside him feels like salvation and damnation all at once.

“Tight” Ilya groans into the skin of Shane’s throat—nipping and soothing with his tongue as he goes. “Always so tight. Makes me come too quick.”

“Fuck, fuck—*shit*,” Shane moans, eyes squeezed shut against the onslaught of sensation. It’s too much—*too good*. Ilya sets an easy rhythm that makes him see stars and he can’t, he *needs* — “More, *please*.”

“Yeah?” Ilya groans, teeth finding Shane’s collarbone and latching on as he sets a punishing rhythm above him. Then, he releases his mouth with an audible *pop* and a, “I love that you like it like this. Hard and fast and *so* desperate to come.”

“*Fuck. Yes.*”

“Then do it.” Ilya leans up, lithe body on display as he takes Shane’s cock in the tight grip of his fist and works him over expertly—years of this letting him know just how he likes it. “Go

on, Hollander. Take what you need from me.”

Shane turns his head into the soft skin of Ilya’s wrist, resting beside his head, and *bites*. Ilya’s moan and the pulse of his cock inside him sends Shane over the edge, both of them gasping for breath as they find their release.

Later, Shane will try to ignore the *wrongness* of leaving; the way every bone in his body wants to *stay* as he rises to leave.

“So, I’ll be seeing you in a few weeks?” Ilya asks from the bed as Shane moves around the room, collecting his forgotten clothes. “In Boston, yes?”

“Absolutely,” Shane says, straightening the hem of the tee he’d tugged over his head moments before. He levels Ilya with a playful grin, too sated to be considered a true smirk. “I’d hate for you to get the wrong idea and think you could actually *win* if I wasn’t there.”

Ilya’s eyes heat and he hums a sound that makes Shane’s pulse thrum to life once more.

“We’ll see about that,” he says. Then, “Merry Christmas, as always, Hollander”

“Merry Christmas, Rozanov,” Shane replies. Then he’s gone before the thrum in his chest can bloom into something greater—something that feels like he’s leaving something *important* behind.

2016

Her presence beside him is a comfort—Shane likes that she ignites a room with easy confidence, that she lets him fade into the background of her orbit. He likes that she stretches up and whispers quiet quips and teasing jokes in his ear while the party fades into the background. It's in Boston this year, housed in some creaking historic building that's drafty despite the press of bodies. Usually he hates these events; usually he wants to hide. But she makes him feel at ease—it's why he loves everything about her.

At least, until she stretches up and presses her mouth to his. Then he remembers that he loves *almost* everything about her.

"I need to use the restroom," Shane tells Rose, leaning down to press a kiss to her cheek before disentangling himself from her hold. She merely smiles up at him before continuing her conversation with Hayden and Jackie.

He should have known it'd be too easy to hope he wouldn't come. Should have anticipated that a party in Boston would lead to his guaranteed appearance. Still, as Shane stands over the basin, hands sudsy with the soap he scrubs into his knuckles, he finds himself surprised when the door opens and Ilya strides in. He doesn't mean to, but Shane subconsciously begins moving faster—a motion noticed immediately by Ilya, who strides over to the urinal and unzips his slacks.

"Relax, Hollander. I'm here to take a piss, not talk to your sorry ass." Then, when Shane remains quiet, he throws a glance at him from over his shoulder. "You can go now."

Shane feels heat rise in his face, shame settling in the pit of his belly as he thinks about the last time he'd seen him—the last time they'd been together in Boston. Of the sound of his name from Ilya's lips; of complications and cowardice jumbled into one tangled mess of a memory.

He thinks to apologize; then he thinks to be spiteful, to tell him *I like girls too, just like you do*. Then, he just stands in silence—uncertainty warring within him until he hears the urinal flush.

"Still here?" Ilya asks with an arched brow. Then, eyeing the empty room around him, he asks, "What? Hoping for a quick fuck while your girlfriend schmoozes your sponsors?"

"Fuck you," Shane spits, though his face heats. Then, "I don't—that's not—" He cuts off on a curse and then, again, "*fuck you*."

"Ask nicely, Hollander." It's like his brain is hardwired to want the man in front of him and Shane *hates* it. But Ilya notices all the same; latches on tight with a vicious gleam in his eyes that makes Shane wary. "Go on, ask. Ask to suck my cock in this bathroom and I just might let you."

Shane isn't sure what's worse; that his stomach is churning with nerves that someone will walk in, or, worse, that he fucking *wants to*. Wants to get on his knees and crawl; wants to beg for all the things he'd given up the night he'd chosen Rose.

Instead, he fights back a sudden rush of tears.

"Fuck. You." He spits out.

Ilya eyes him for a long time, his chest rising and falling with the motion of his breaths, and then, finally, he lets out a humorless breath of laughter.

"Yeah, whatever Hollander. Merry Christmas."

Then he moves past him, his familiar smell like a balm on every frazzled nerve ending in Shane's body, and he's gone before Shane can respond.

2017

Shane isn't sure what's odder—the Arizona desert stretching as far as he can see instead of the usual December snow, or the fact that Ilya Rozanov walks in beside him.

The Unlikely Duo—that's what the news outlets call their friendship. After years of rivalry, it's only natural that people would be surprised to learn of their friendship, even more so to learn of their Foundation together. But as *deuxmoi* and TMZ had finally died down, they'd finally been able to go out in public together without a scene.

In private, though, things finally felt right. After the All Star Game, the hospital, the *cottage*—it felt like everything between them finally just made *sense*. It's why the small box in Shane's pocket feels like a burning weight, dragging him down into a pit of nervous energy.

"You okay?" Ilya asks, the back of his hand brushing Shane's as they step into the event hall.

"Yeah, I just..." He struggles for an excuse, coming up short. Finally, he blurts out, "honestly? I just hate these parties. I only come because you do."

Ilya looks taken aback for a moment, then offers Shane a small smile.

"Let's skip next year, hm?" His eyes scan the room around them for listening ears before he leans slightly closer and adds in a whisper, "I can think of better ways to sneak around for the holidays. At least for a little while longer."

Until they're ready; until the buzz of Hunter coming out and their own friendship truly dies down. For now, though? Having this, *him*, is enough.

"I think I'd like that a lot, actually." Shane says, smiling. Then, he nods towards the rest of the party. "Come on, let's get this over with."

They chat with sponsors, talking hockey and philanthropy and their shocking friendship. They talk and talk until they both seize a quiet moment to sneak outside and around to an alleyway.

"Fuck, they talk for ages," Ilya groans, his head thumping back against the siding behind him. "It makes me want a cigarette."

"I was going to wait to give you this, but I feel like... well, we're alone for the moment, so, um, might as well." Shane pulls the box from his pocket and holds it out to Ilya with fingers that shake slightly.

Ilya eyes the small square box for a moment, arching an eyebrow before looking back up at Shane expectantly.

"Is condom?" He asks. Shane splutters out a shocked noise.

“No, it’s not a fucking *condom*, Ilya.” Then, he scrubs at his face and holds his hand out. “Just... *fuck*, just open it.”

“*Okay*, okay. Do not murder me over your condom present.”

He opens the box and peers inside, the silver chain shaking slightly.

“You got me jewelry?” Ilya asks, his eyes dancing as he looks up at Shane. “Like I’m a wife you pissed off?”

“Shut *up*, ” Shane grumbles, face flaming.

Ilya’s smile gleams. He steps across the space between them, closing the distance with a murmured, “I didn’t know we were doing gifts. I would have gotten you something nice.”

“It’s okay, I just...” Shane swallows, distracted as Ilya’s nose skims up his own. “I wanted to give you something special.”

“I love it,” Ilya answers. Presses his lips to Shane’s softly and pulls back with heated eyes. “Looks like I’ll have to give you the same nine inches you get every year as a present.”

“Fuck off,” Shane laughs, shoving Ilya away playfully. Still his belly roils with anticipation, his face flaming at the thought of what would come when the party finally subsided. “Merry Christmas, Ilya.”

“Merry Christmas, Shane.” Ilya says, shockingly serious as he stares down at him. Then, he clears his throat and sets to freeing the necklace from the box it sits in. “Now help me get this out, I want to put it on and be pretty like you.”

Shane’s only answer is a snort of laughter.

fin

End Notes

thanks for reading!!! if u wanna be pals and scream about the show find me on [twitter](#)!!!

also a special thank you to my pals who read thru this beforehand and told me it wasn't terrible. luv u forever and ever.

xoxo

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