

last name (first name)

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by [londonfoglatte \(nimbus2003\)](#)

Summary

part 1: five times they're forced to be Hollander and Rozanov -- and one time they get to be Shane and Ilya.

OR

it took thirteen years to get to this table. to earn the right to be Shane and Ilya. it was worth every damned second.

part 2: five times they choose to be Hollander and Rozanov -- and one time they choose to be Shane and Ilya.

OR

after years of hiding, it's a joy to wake up with a choice.

Notes

hi! this is going to be a two shot because i think it will be fun to see how the same concept can play out as angst vs. fluff. part 1 is mostly pre-TLG, part 2 is entirely post-TLG.

the basic idea is: five times shane and ilya knew exactly who the fuck they were. toying with it in the first half to focus on how they were painfully aware of their media personas/reputations. tweaking in the second half to focus on times they chose to lean in to their career and legacy.

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

Chapter 1: obligation

1. Stormclouds Don't Smile

Cliff Marlow doesn't mind Boston. It's cold, wet, and windy – so, a lot like Canada, actually. Whatever. He doesn't give a fuck where he lives, as long as he gets to play hockey.

His mom cares. She spends hours researching Boston real estate, debating the merits of Brookline and Beacon Hill. Eventually, she forces Cliff to buy a condo in the North End.

You'll like it, honey. There's good Italian food there.

That's good enough for Cliff. Carbs, chicks, and hockey. The three essentials.

Boston agrees. The city is built around sports – literally. The Big Dig is no joke. Nobody stresses about fashion, including the girls, who are fairly laid back. There's food everywhere.

Dream scenario.

Cliff likes to take public transit to games, which is stupid for a few reasons. First off, it's never on time. He's always rushing to the arena, blowing off the press and slamming on his skates.

He gets recognized, too. Sometimes it's nice – a chance to meet hometown fans. Sometimes, strangers in opposing team jerseys threaten to beat the shit out of him. That's less nice.

Still, he takes the T. It's a ritual – and hockey players love ritual.

When they play Montreal, though, Cliff takes an Uber. He hates it, but he can't risk being late. Not when his boy needs him.

Ilya Rozanov is an asshole. In spite of this – or maybe because of it – he's Cliff's best friend. He was drafted to the Bears a season before Cliff, the same year Shane Hollander was drafted to Montreal.

The media is obsessed with pitting Rozanov and Hollander against each other. It's a sharp, grating thorn in the side of their otherwise idyllic careers.

Thus, the Uber. If Cliff isn't there to diffuse the Montreal situation, Roz will throw a punch during warm-ups.

Cliff finds his unruly captain in the locker room, staring at a cinderblock wall. He calls Ilya's name. No reaction. Roz is either drowning his panic in Russian EDM or ignoring him.

Undeterred, Cliff smacks the headphones off Roz's head. Across the room, a rookie winces.

“I *said*, were the reporters dicks today?”

Rozanov looks up at Cliff with a blank expression.

“Is scary Hollander is here, no? Will play well against Hollander? What do you think of Hollander’s –”

“I get the idea.” Cliff waves, cutting off Rozanov’s rant. “Let’s just go out there and kick his ass, okay?”

Watching Rozanov on the ice is like watching an assassin stalk his prey. He scopes out the other team during the anthem. It drives their coach insane.

Try to at least look interested, Roz.

Why? Is not my country.

If Roz smells weakness or, God forbid, fear, he makes a point of skating circles around the weak link before opening face-off.

Once the puck drops, he doesn’t shut his fucking mouth.

Cliff loves it.

Tonight’s victim seems to be Shane Hollander. No shock there. It’s *always* Shane, every time they play Montreal.

Rozanov smirks, leaning into the face-off.

“Backhand improving, Hollander?”

“Fuck you, Rozanov.”

Hollander wins the puck. Cliff groans.

They make it to the second period without a fight. It doesn’t sound like much, but it’s a Boston vs. Montreal record.

It’s all going well, until Rozanov shoves Hollander into the boards, grabbing his jersey.

Cliff spits, coming to a stop. “What the *fuck*?”

Next to him, Price shrugs. “Fuck if I know. Guy’s off his rocker.”

They watch for a second, taking in the sound of Rozanov’s rant. Cliff sighs. “Let’s go get our boy.”

Rozanov and Hollander receive two penalty minutes each. They refuse to make eye contact, even in the box.

In the end, Boston ekes out a win, thanks to a brutal slap-shot by Rozanov.

It's a buzzer beater. Cliff expects Rozanov to grin – to cheer, at least. Instead, his friend nods. Like winning is an obligation, not an accomplishment.

Cliff's heart twinges. He looks up. Once again, Rozanov's seats are empty.

The NHL's favorite bad boy. Successful. Rich. *Alone*.

And too broken to smile.

*

Lily

give me two hour

Jane

Who's asking?

Lily

sore loser, i see

Jane

Fuck you.

Jane

Yours or mine?

Lily

buzz at penthouse when you're here

*

Shane hates going to Ilya's penthouse. But he does it.

Every *single* time.

Because, apparently, he's a slut where Ilya Rozanov is concerned.

Shane buzzes, checking his surroundings for photographers. The door springs open; he slips inside.

Ilya grabs Shane as he steps out of the elevator, smashing their lips together.

"Such a mean bruise," Ilya whispers, tracing the blooming welt on Shane's back.

Shane scoffs, pulling back. "Some *dick* gave it to me during a hockey game. Got offended when I called him a cheater."

"For the third time. After two warning." Ilya shrugs, making the action look graceful. Shane *hates* him. "Deserved it."

Shane shoves Ilya. "Dirty talk on the ice is low, even for you."

Ilya steps closer. Shane shoves him again, getting a sick rise out of watching Ilya stumble.

A beat.

Ilya stares, watching Shane intently. Then, in one, fluid motion, he slams Shane onto the couch, pinning his arms above his head.

Asshole.

Infuriatingly, Shane can feel himself getting hard. From being pinned down. By Ilya *fucking* Rozanov.

That's great. A new personal low.

Above him, Ilya grins.

Despite himself, Shane grins too. He knows Roz has hook-ups in every city. Probably grins at all of them.

But for one, shining moment, Shane lets himself believe he's special.

2. Captains Don't Beg

"C'mon man," Hayden begs. "How bad can it be?"

"Absolutely not." Shane clicks on his turning indicator. "I don't care how many times you ask, Hayden. We are *not* discussing my sexual preferences."

Hayden groans, slumping into his seat. "Jackie wants to set you up with one of her friends. How else do you want me to vet people?"

"Here's an idea," Shane offers. "Stop trying."

“Great. Perfect. Do you want to tell Jackie to fuck off, or should I?”

Shane winces. “I owe you one.”

Hayden turns to his friend, shocked. “You’re *really* going to hang me out to dry?”

Shane checks the speedometer, eyes firmly on the road. “Yes.”

“If you don’t tell me, I’ll assume it’s something scandalous...”

Shane shrugs. “That’s fine.”

Pine trees whizz past. “Like feet.”

“Go right ahead.”

Hayden laughs. “God, Shane. It really *is* something wild.”

*

Hayden badgers Shane through the entirety of Canada and the continental United States. When that doesn’t work, he badgers him through the off-season. At his house. At the cottage.

Until, finally, in a shitty Embassy Suites, Hayden rolls over and asks:

“Are you just, like... gay?”

Hayden’s not sure why he asks. The thought has been bugging him for a few weeks. Not bugging like – Jesus, he’s not *homophobic*. It’s just that he’s running out of kinks. He’s resorted to googling obscure Victorian sex rituals. It’s either something truly insane, or something hiding in plain sight.

Shane chokes, panicked. Hayden stares at his best friend. “It’s fine if you are, you know. I won’t tell anyone.”

Like a damn breaking, tears roll out of Shane’s closed eyes. “Yeah,” he eventually admits. Quiet. Resigned. “I’m gay.”

They’re not the type of friends that hug. But Shane looks *small* on the shitty hotel mattress. Shaking. Terrified.

Hayden can practically hear Jackie yelling at him.

Get your ass over there, Pike. Hug your damn friend.

He jumps onto Shane’s bed, weight sinking the mattress, and throws his arms around Shane. “I don’t give a shit, Shane. You know that, right?”

“I wasn’t sure,” Shane admits. “I know that’s shitty. You’re a good guy. It’s just –”

“Terrifying.”

Shane nods. “That.”

“Well, it’s fine.” Hayden looks around, at a loss. “Want to get gross takeout and watch Mission Impossible?”

“Yeah,” Shane says. “I really fucking do.”

*

It takes Hayden a couple of weeks to adjust. He’s never had a gay friend before; he’s not sure about the protocol.

He desperately wants to make Shane comfortable – Hollzy developed a skittish look in his eye after the night in the motel. Thing is, Hayden has no idea how to fix it.

“Just be normal,” Jackie suggests, waving a spoon of tomato sauce. “What did you guys talk about before he came out? Hockey? Rant about game tactics and power-plays. Nothing’s different.”

Except, it *is* different. Hayden and Shane have talked about hockey plenty of times in the past few weeks. Shane is no more at ease.

What else do they talk about?

The answer strikes Hayden. He pulls out his phone.

Hayden

Drinks 2nite?

Shane

Read 17:13

Shane

Yeah, sounds cool. My place at 8?

Hayden pumps his fist. Perfect. A nice, private place for some good, old-fashioned boy chat.

He gets there early, fishing pole and cooler in tow. Shane waves from the dock, holding a line and smiling. He’s always more relaxed at the cottage.

They have a great evening. Hayden falls off Shane's jetski three times. A few hours later, they sit on the deck, beers in hand.

"So," Hayden starts, doing his best impression of casual speech. Clearly, he's a bad actor, because Shane shoots up, eyes wide with alarm. Hayden forces himself to continue. "What's your type? You know... with guys."

Whatever Shane was expecting, it wasn't that. His hands freeze. He turns to Hayden.

"Pardon?"

Hayden waves his hands. "I just... I tease you about girls. Or, I did. It's our thing, you know? I try to set you up. You blow me off."

He sighs. "I don't know, maybe it's stupid. But Jackie keeps telling me to be normal. So I'm being normal. I'm trying to set you up. Just with guys, this time."

A soft, fond expression slips onto Shane's face. "That's... really nice, actually."

"No shit," Hayden says. "I'm a nice guy."

Shane shoves him, laughing.

Hayden picks up his beer, deciding to push it. "Go on, then. What's your type?"

Shane looks sad again, kicking his toes in the water. "I, uh... He trails off. "God, I've never said this out loud."

Hayden stays silent, letting Shane speak at his own pace. He's good at that.

"I like bigger guys," Shane blurts out. "Stronger, taller. Look like they can throw me around a bit."

"That's unexpected."

"Yeah," Shane agrees. "That's part of the problem, actually, with this," he gestures wildly, "thing. Being gay is hard enough. Being like... the smaller one, or whatever. It's a whole other level."

Hayden lets out a long, low whistle. "Jesus. I had no idea."

"It's a thing in the gay community. Nevermind the fact that I'm *Hollander*. Big, tough hockey player. I cried *once* after a game and it went viral for a week."

Hayden leans in, bumping Shane with his shoulder. "I hope you find someone, someday. Who makes you feel safe with... All that."

Shane nods. "Me too."

*

“You like that, Hollander? Fucking —“ Ilya twists, changing the angle, then slams back into Shane. He loses his grasp of English, slipping onto Russian.

“Очень красивая, мой Шлюхоч —“ He inhales, bottoming out. Beneath him, Shane is writhing, a mess of pre-cum and lube. Fuck, he’s pretty like this.

“Please,” Shane begs. “God, I need you —”

Ilya wants to lock Shane in this penthouse and keep him for weeks, until he’s blissed out and sated.

Wants all kinds of stupid things, when it comes to Shane.

Wants a future. Wants *something* worth protecting.

He can’t have that. But he can have this. Shane, desperate and needy, lying underneath him.

3. Demons Don’t Rest

Barrett isn’t sure what to expect when he gets traded to Ottawa. The team has a mixed reputation. Horrible at hockey, good with people.

Thing is, Ilya Rozanov, asshole extraordinaire, recently joined the team. It seems unlikely that a single player will ruin the locker room vibe, but Troy knows better than to write off the possibility.

Learned that the hard way, *thank you very much*.

So, imagine his surprise when Ilya Rozanov greets him with a grin and pat on the back.

Later, the team invites him out for drinks after practice. Rozanov joins, after some prompting.

“Dude, you *never* come out with us.” Hayes shoves his captain, frowning.

“Is not true. Went out two weeks ago.”

Two weeks? Isn’t Rozanov a notorious partier?

The pub is dark and rowdy, a mix of drunk tourists and drunker regulars. Rozanov — who Troy should really stop thinking about — barely touches his drink. He’s quiet. Leaves early.

“Is he always like that?” Troy says, more to the group than to anyone in particular.

Boodram shrugs. “Yeah, pretty much.”

“For what it’s worth, we’re as confused as you are,” Hayes adds. “We were expecting a shit-storm when he transferred. Guy’s an asshole on the ice. But he’s okay, otherwise.”

Troy nods, suspicious but relieved.

As the season goes on, mistrust fades into friendship. One random Sunday, Troy Barrett realizes Ilya Rozanov has become his best friend.

He's sitting on the couch, thinking about coming out, when it happens.

The guys are chill; Troy thinks they'll be nice about him being gay. Still, it might be good to test the waters.

You can tell Roz.

The thought strikes him, unbidden. Bizarrely, Troy doesn't hate the idea. Somewhere between the trade and now, he's come to trust his asshole captain implicitly.

In fact, Rozanov is the person he most wants to tell.

Problem is, Roz is always busy. He disappears after home games. Spends half his time fulfilling sponsorship contacts, and the rest glued to his phone.

So, it feels like fate when Troy finds the Russian chilling in an empty locker room, late on a Friday, stretching.

Troy plops down on a bench, kicking away a stray chunk of ice.

"I'm gay," he says, voice wavering.

Rozanov freezes, looking up at Troy. And *grins*?

"I know," Roz says, switching to the other leg. "Is pretty obvious."

Troy laughs. "Dude, fuck you. I was nervous."

Serious now, Rozanov shakes his head. "Shouldn't be. This is good team. They won't care." He smirks. "Harris will be thrilled."

"You're not, like... weirded out?"

Rozanov grins. "Would be hypocritical of me, I think."

What, *what*?

After a tense, loaded moment, the Russian shrugs. "I am bisexual."

*

They play Boston a few weeks later. Not for the first time, Troy is struck by how *different* Roz is in public. He flips off a reporter who asks about his rivalry with Shane. Troy has to physically restrain him during warm-ups. *Warm-ups!*

Roz is a menace on the fucking ice. He taunts Hammersmith into punching him, then skates off, spitting blood and scoring on the power play. He racks up five penalty minutes over the course of the game, but deserves around twenty.

After the buzzer, he throws a sweaty arm around Troy's shoulder. "We're going out tonight. Marlow knows good clubs."

Troy is usually a pub kind of guy, but he plays along. Watches Roz down shot after shot. He skips the VIP area, going straight to the DJ booth and commanding the turntable. Troy is pretty sure their night out will be all over Instagram by tomorrow.

He can't reconcile the playboy animal in front of him with his friend who cries over dogs.

Rozanov doesn't chill after games the way Ilya does. He doesn't settle down, or bother with friends. He gets drunk every night, and plays like a maniac the next day.

It must be exhausting, to live your life in a box built by the media.

*

"-- take it slow tonight?"

Shane smiles, poking his boyfriend's chest. "Of course we can."

Ilya spends long, tender minutes easing Shane into it. Adding enough lube to erase the pain. Gently pressing fingers inside, until Shane is shivering and begging for it.

Ilya kisses him gently. "I've got you, Солнышко. Will give you what you need."

He presses in, and *fuck* it's a lot. But it's the good kind of burn, and Shane adjusts. Loves feeling like this – full and loved.

4. Menaces Don't Make Hospital Visits

JJ having a great Tuesday. It's a strategy day – his favorite kind. Plus, Hollzy invited him and Pike over for dinner. They usually meet at restaurants, where they get hounded by the press, or at Pike's, where kids are constantly interrupting.

Hollander's private cottage, in contrast, is secluded and quiet. Perfect place to have a few beers and shoot the shit.

They finish practice on a high, with a shooting drill that has JJ grinning. Half an hour later, they pile into Hollander's sensible Jeep Cherokee, freshly-showered and starving.

Shane gets quiet as the drive goes on. JJ tries not to think too much of it – he's used to Shane's moods.

Dinner is well-cooked and under-seasoned – exactly as JJ expected. It’s comforting, almost, to know that no matter how famous Shane gets, he’ll always be the guy who eats bland salmon.

A few drinks later, Shane clears his throat. “So, uh... There’s something I’ve been wanting to tell you guys.” He swallows, clearly nervous. “I know it’s going to be a shock, but please hear me out. Promise me that, at least.”

What the fuck?

JJ nods quickly, watching Hayden do the same. “Anything you need, Shane.”

His friend looks down, hair falling into his eyes. “I’m gay,” he says. “I guess that’s a good place to start. Hayden knows. JJ, I want you to know too.”

It’s a shock, but not, like. A *shock*. Shane’s notoriously private. Rarely linked to women. He fumbled *Rose Landry*, for fuck’s sake. Putting it all together, it probably should’ve been obvious.

“That’s fine, Shane.” JJ smiles. He’s a bit hurt that Hayden found at first, but whatever. Shane told him eventually. That’s what matters.

Weirdly, there’s still tension in Shane’s posture. JJ grabs his hand, squeezing. “You can relax, Hollander. I don’t care.”

Shane closes his eyes. “I’m seeing someone.”

Hayden looks shocked. JJ is secretly relieved – he’s not entirely out of the loop, then.

“That’s great,” Hayden responds, enthusiastic. “What’s he like?”

“You... actually know him.” Shane is pale. Is he *sweating*?

“It’s Ilya.”

Silence. Then:

“Ilya Rozanov —“

“Tell me you’re kidding —“

Shane shakes his head. “I’m not.”

JJ exhales, stunned. He can feel the weight of the moment in the air — feel his friendship with Shane hanging by a thread.

“How long?” He chokes out.

Shane smiles, a bit of color coming back to his face. “Forever, really.”

Hayden’s brows knit. “The fuck do you mean, forever?”

Shane stares at the table. “From the day we met, it was — something.”

Holy shit.

Shane Hollander is in in love with Ilya *fucking* Rozanov.

JJ takes a deep breath. “You ever thrown a game for him? Missed a pass, or let him score?”

Shane snorts. “Makes me play harder, if anything. When the skates are on, we’re rivals.”

Leaning back in his chair, JJ thinks through their games against Boston and Ottawa. Shane always skates like he’s possessed. Slowly, JJ nods. “Okay.”

Hayden shakes his beer can. “You got anything stronger? This calls for, like —“

“Tequila?” Shane offers.

Hayden grins. “Perfect.”

*

“So, hang on,” Hayden slurs. They’re three shots in; the liquor is starting to catch up with them. “When you snuck out in Boston, you were going to —“

“Ilya’s penthouse,” Shane confirms.

JJ cackles. “Goddamn, man. Who knew you were such a freak?”

“Rozanov, probably,” Hayden says, downing another shot. “Right, okay. Is he any better off the ice?”

Shane drums his fingers on the table. “Sometimes. Not always. He’s still Roz, you know?”

“You like that, though,” JJ exclaims, catching a glint in Shane’s eye. “You *like* that he’s a little dangerous.”

“Maybe.”

Hell will freeze over before JJ considers Rozanov a friend. But, if Shane loves him, he can try to punch the guy less next time they play.

*

As JJ suits up for their next game against Ottawa, he realizes he has no idea what to expect. Under normal circumstances, he’d shake hands with his friend’s boyfriend. Introduce himself. But this is Rozanov, not a stranger, and they’re meeting on the ice. JJ can’t even allude to his relationship with Shane.

Fortunately — or unfortunately — Rozanov starts the game by slamming JJ into the fucking boards. JJ looks at Shane, raising an eyebrow.

This is your fucking guy?

Hollander shrugs, skating after Rozanov.

JJ exhales. So, that's how they do this. They play like nothing has changed.

As the game continues, Rozanov is, if anything, on his worst behavior. He

punches one of the Metros in the first. Troy Barrett pulls him off the guy, looking exhausted.

He checks JJ from behind in the second, trying to steal the puck. It ends up soaring into the box, leaving JJ and Rozanov to face-off.

The Russian grins. "See you for drinks, да?"

JJ is *not* looking forward to meeting him for a beer after the game, but he promised Shane. It's probably too late to back out.

Rozanov runs his tongue over his mouth guard. "How does it feel to lose every face-off with me. Bad, no?"

"You dick —"

JJ loses the face-off.

He switches lines, breathing heavy on the bench. Is this how Shane feels every game? Whiplash and secrets? It can't be easy.

They're near the end of the third, now. They just need to maintain their lead, and the game will be over.

Hollzy surges forward, kissing the edge of the rink.

JJ sees the hit coming.

Shane doesn't.

His body hits the ice with a dull, sickening thud.

Medics rush onto the ice, wasting no time. Hollzy is unresponsive, bleeding into his helmet. JJ leans over a basket, heaving.

When he can stand, he looks for Rozanov. Shane is gone — deep in the tunnels of the stadium, strapped to a body board.

Rozanov is pale. He's staring at the ice. No — not at the ice. At Shane's blood, freezing onto the icy surface.

Their coaches call the game. There's barely a minute left, and no one feels like picking up their sticks. JJ grabs Hayden and gets an Uber to the hospital.

Shane's parents are with him, so JJ and Hayden linger in the hall, pacing.

Half an hour later, the door to the private corridor opens. Rozanov strides through. He's freshly showered – wearing clean clothes. It rubs JJ the wrong way.

“Better things to do than check on Shane?” He drags an eye across Rozanov's body, lips curled in disdain.

Rozanov scoffs. “Get the fuck away.”

And you know what? *No*.

“You're crazy if you think I'm letting you through that door,” JJ says, blocking the entrance.

Rage contorts Rozanov's features. “Fuck you.”

He shoves JJ, slamming him into the wall. “What do you want me to do? Tell my team I cannot do post-game speech because I'm in love with Shane Hollander? I would — don't give a shit. But Shane does.”

Rozanov lets go of JJ's shirt, stepping back. “You have *no idea* how I feel. What it is like to watch him fall. Now, move. Or I will move you.”

JJ steps aside. Hayden nods at Rozanov, who mutters something in Russian.

*

Ilya steps into Shane's hospital room, sagging with relief when he sees his boyfriend sitting up, talking to his parents.

Yuna turns, smiling softly. “Ilya. You made it.”

He waves a hand. “Of course.”

Ilya runs a hand through Shane's hair. “You scared me, мой любовь.”

Shane winces, trying to face Ilya. “Didn't mean to.”

“Is fine,” Ilya says. He leans in, risking a gentle kiss. “Your friends are outside — worried. If I do not make team flight...”

Shane nods. “I know.”

Ilya lets himself stay close to Shane for a second, listening to his heartbeat. Then he straightens and forces himself to walk out the door.

5. Enemies Don't Kiss

Svetlana loves Ilya Rozanov. It's never been romantic between them, but he's a good fuck and a respectful guy. Perfect combination.

When she hears he has a boyfriend, she's a bit disappointed. Dating in Boston is the tenth circle of hell. It's not easy to find someone who's consistent, respectful, *and* aware of where the clit is.

Whatever. He moved to Ottawa, for fuck's sake. She should've known there was a guy.

Ilya rented an apartment, solely to create private space for her to meet his boyfriend — ridiculous, but not surprising. The building is spacious, with modern accents and an industrial vibe. As floors tick by on the elevator screen, she toys with her long, acrylic nail.

Svetlana knocks. The doors open, and she's greeted by — *Shane Hollander?*

Ilya stands behind him, grinning.

“Илья, что за хрень?” She slips into Russian, shock knocking the English out of her.

“ведь знаете Шейна Холландера, верно?”

She coughs. “Yes, Ilya. I know Shane Hollander. What the fuck is Shane Hollander doing in your house?”

She looks at Shane, then at Ilya. Then at Shane.

“Holy *shit*,” she exclaims. “Илья, tell me you have the good водка.” Then, realizing she's being rude, she pulls Shane Hollander into a hug. He's made of pure muscle. She winks at Ilya over Shane's shoulder.

They trail into the kitchen, Svetlana and Ilya chattering rapidly in Russian.

“Sorry,” she says, slapping a shot in front of Hollander. “Just need to get out a few more *holy shits* in my mother tongue.”

Shane laughs. “No, it's fine. It's kinda nice, actually, to watch him speak Russian. He sounds —” Shane waves his hands, searching for a word. “Different. Happier. I'm trying to learn, but, you know. Hard language. I have some catching up to do.”

It's then and there, after discovering that Shane Hollander is learning Russian for her boy, that Svetlana decides they should keep him.

It's not just that he's learning it.

It's that Shane *noticed*. He took the time to realize how Ilya struggles in English conversations — how hard it is, living your life in translation.

“So,” she drawls. “How long has this little disaster been brewing?”

“He's Jane.” Ilya stares at her as he says it, watching Svetlana's reaction.

Despite her shock — and the small, lonely twinge of hurt — Svetlana forces herself to laugh.

She wishes Ilya told her sooner, but she won't make him regret telling her now.

“Nice to meet you, Jane.” She lets her voice get rough and husky, enjoying watching the Canadian blush.

Ilya looks instantly jealous, which is both charming and stupid. Par for the course.

They have a fun evening. It feels like the setup to a threesome, Svetlana thinks, laughing. An interview that goes both ways, between Svetlana and Shane.

She leaves drunk, satisfied, and slightly turned on.

*

The Uber drops her off at her apartment around eleven. Svetlana dumps her keys in a bowl and heads to the bathroom, kicking off her heels on the way. After forcing herself to wash her face, she throws on ratty pajamas and crawls into bed.

Her laptop glows, lighting up her dark room. She types, the keys making a faint, clacking sound.

Shane Hollander.

She hits search.

Svetlana clicks on the first result. On screen, Hollander is a different person. Intense. Serious. A far cry from the soft-spoken, gentle guy she met.

He stares at Ilya, leaning in for a face off. And he *wins*.

Hollander shoots off like a rocket, weaving through the defense and slamming a humiliating shot into the back of the net.

Fuck.

Toying with her curls, Svetlana goes back to the search results.

Hollander High IQ Moments

Wearing Canada red, Hollander lags behind his defense. When the big men miss a stop, it should be a breakaway for Sweden — but Hollander is there, reading the pass. Like he knew it would happen. Like he was waiting for it.

Svetlana's only seen one other person play hockey like that. Ilya Rozanov.

Speaking of.

She types a new query. Hits search.

Sure, why not? That'll work.

Baby-faced versions of the boys appear. It's shitty, grainy footage from their first Prospect Cup.

She watches them slam each other into the boards, fighting for every inch. When they think no one is looking, they steal glances at each other, and pure, childish wonder fills their expressions.

*

"Fuck," Shane groans. Ilya has him splayed out, face down on the couch. They played a rough game tonight — full of physical contact and penalties.

Even during their most violent games, Shane loves playing against Ilya. It can be lonely on the ice. His teammates don't quite *get it*. Not like Ilya.

Sometimes Shane thinks that's what drew them together in the first place.

"You think too much," Ilya says, running a hand down Shane's back and slapping his ass. Not hard, but not soft either.

It's the kind of possessive touch that sets Shane's body on fire.

Some nights, they like to take it slow. Not tonight. Tonight, Ilya slams into him with a delicious, rabid kind of ferocity.

6. Lovers Always Smile

Ilya never thought he'd be *excited* for his first All-Star Game after being outed. But here he is, sweating in the Florida heat, opening a car door for his *husband*.

Shane steps out of Ilya's Porsche, wearing an Armani suit. Black pants, black jacket, shades. No shirt. A thrill runs through Ilya. He's always been attracted to his husband, but seeing him act like a hotshot *does something* to Ilya.

For his part, Ilya is wearing Saint-Laurent ready-to-wear. Loose, leather trousers kiss a lace shirt at his waist. He smiles, waving to fans, and takes his husband's hand.

They enter the press conference together. A few old timers in the press box sneer.

Fuck them.

Ilya lounges, draping a lazy arm over the back of Shane's chair. Their agent gives a thumbs up, cueing the first question.

“Mr. Rozanov, it’s been a controversial season. Several retired players have called for your removal – and for the institution of a morality clause in NHL contracts. Would you like to respond?”

“No,” Ilya says.

The word is soft and delicious in his mouth.

No, I don’t care to respond. No, I don’t give a fuck about washed-up bigots. No, you don’t get to hear me get angry.

Ilya leans in. “Next question.”

Shane squeezes his thigh.

It took thirteen years to get to this table. To earn the right to be Shane and Ilya.

It was worth every damned second.

Chapter 2: freedom

Chapter Notes

hi hi hi :) sorry this one took awhile! i fear i was struck by the ao3 author curse and spent a hot second under the weather. back now, and excited to be writing regularly again.

this chapter is meant to explore shane and ilya's lives after coming out, when they have the ability to be in the public eye, but not the obligation. it focuses on times they still choose to be hotshot hockey legends.

xoxoo love you all byeeee

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

1. Gold Medals Don't Tarnish

Ilya Grigoryevich Rozanov becomes a Canadian citizen on December 23 — two days before Christmas.

The Citizenship Office glows with soft, festive cheer. The plastic ceremony chairs are draped with tinsel and garlands; paper snowflakes hang from the fluorescent ceiling light. Outside, blankets of snow glisten in the winter sun.

Yuna squeezes Shane's shoulder, watching Ilya step forward to collect his certificate.

"We're stuck with him now," David says. His eyes crinkle, folding into smile lines.
"Wouldn't have it any other way."

Yuna nods, fighting back tears. The years of fear — of waking up, struck by panic, terrified that Russia will tear Ilya away from them — are finally over.

Her son is *home*.

There's a commotion at the front of the room. Some of the newly minted citizens want photos with Ilya. He's a good sport about it, shaking hands and smiling. A few minutes later, he escapes the pack and joins the Hollanders.

"Should we go?" Yuna asks. She doesn't want to rush him, but she's trying to keep them on track for the surprise party waiting at home.

Ilya nods, but before he can speak, his phone rings. A name flashes across the screen.

Coach Roy.

Yuna sucks in a breath. Could it be?

Ilya swipes, taking the call. “Hello?”

The jolly, booming voice of Elliot Roy crackles out of Ilya’s phone. Yuna can’t make out the conversation — but she can see a grin spreading across Ilya’s face.

“Yes, sir,” Ilya says, nodding. “Is my honor.”

He nods again, still listening. “Thank you, Coach.”

Ilya hangs up the phone and turns to Shane. “They want me. The national team, for the Olympics.”

He chokes out the word Olympics, a tear glistening on his cheek. “They watched my ceremony — wanted to call as soon as it was done.”

Yuna grabs her son, pulling him into a hug. Shane piles on, then David, until they’re a laughing, cheering pile of family.

*

When Ilya is young, he dreams of playing for Russia. It’s a common dream, as unremarkable as butterless каша.

His friends’ dreams of glory fade with age.

His sharpen.

Ilya is *made* for hockey. He’s merciless on the ice — and off it. He smokes, drinks, and fucks his way through Moscow. He scores flashy, cutthroat goals. He’s criminally efficient. Strong. Fast.

Here, scouts say, is a real Russian man.

Whatever, Ilya thinks, slamming into his coach’s son.

He makes the team when he’s 16. He likes how it makes him feel.

Respected. Inevitable.

Hollow?

Ilya loves Russia. Loves quiet snowstorms and old, creaky buildings. Loves good водка, his father’s дача, and пельмени smothered in cream.

The thing is, Russia doesn’t love him back. Ilya drowns in the Russian locker room, awash slurs and scrutiny.

Years later, Ilya is unsure what to expect from Team Canada. But he wants to play. Wants to win gold with a stupid, red leaf on his jersey.

Ilya sighs, shaking out his shoulders, and steps onto the ice.

To his right, Shane slams a pass at Hayden Pike, who curses. “This is warm-ups, you sick fuck —”

“Swear jar,” JJ Boiziau chides, skating past.

Barrett stops short in front of Ilya, tossing a puck his way. “You look good in red.”

Ilya shrugs. “I look good in every color.”

Laughter echoes across the rink. JJ claps Shane on the back, chuckling about... something.

Ilya’s lip curls.

Barrett raises an eyebrow. “You got a problem with Boiziau?”

“No. Yes?” Ilya waves his hands, searching for the words. “He was not kind to Shane — the trip, you know? He apologized. Shane forgave him.”

“I thought he knew about you guys?”

Ilya shrugs, kicking a skate into the ice. “He did.”

Barrett taps his stick against the boards. “Try not to kill the guy, Roz. We need a winger.”

*

“We’re in Italy,” JJ half-says, half-whines, wrapping an arm around Shane’s shoulder. “Can we *please* go get drunk on some nice Italian wine?”

Shane throws a practice jersey into his stall. “We have a game on Friday.”

“It’s Tuesday,” Barrett counters. He collapses onto the bench, breathing heavy. “Come on, Hollander. Don’t make us sneak out.”

JJ scans the locker room. “Rozanov,” he calls, catching sight of the Centaurs’ captain. “You think we should go out, no?”

“I think,” Rozanov says, voice full of poison, “you should listen to your captain.”

JJ winces. Still hates his guts, then. Good to know.

Shane looks between his husband and his friend. Then, unexpectedly, he throws up his hands. “Fine. We’re going out.”

They meet at a bar around nine; Shane and Rozanov arrive together. JJ tries *not* to think about the bruise on Shane’s collarbone.

None of them are usually wine drinkers, but when in Rome, right? Or — when in Italy, anyway.

Wine is pretty alcoholic. Much more alcoholic than beer – JJ’s preferred poison. All this to say, he gets drunk *much* faster than intended. His teammates make similar miscalculations.

By eleven, Team Canada is sloshed – including Shane Hollander, who grabs his husband’s hand and drags him to the end of the table, interrupting JJ’s conversation with Hayes in the process.

“Sorry Hazy,” Hollander says. “This is critical.”

He waves his hands, gesturing between Rozanov and JJ. “I’m going to leave. When I come back, you’ll have sorted this shit out.”

His brow furrows. “At least for the Olympics.”

True to his word, Hollander turns and heads for the bar.

Rozanov stares at JJ, unmoving.

“Come on,” JJ says. “You heard him. Let’s talk about this.”

“You are shit friend. Is nothing to talk about.” Rozanov examines his nails, disinterest rolling off him in waves. “When time comes, I will pass to you. Good enough?”

“Who the fuck are you to hold that shit against me? Hollzy let it go three years ago.”

Rozanov’s lip curls. “I am his *husband*.” He slams a hand on the table. “You think he let it go? Team he built calls him a cheater. Best friend agrees. And it is what? A blip in the past?”

“He said —“

Roz scoffs, leaning back in his chair. “He forgave you. He forgives everyone. Does not mean you deserve it.”

That night, JJ sits in his hotel room, staring at the wall.

“Shit,” he mutters, throwing himself onto the bed.

Ilya *fucking* Rozanov has a point.

*

Russia versus Canada. Classic rivalry, enhanced by Rozanov’s recent defection. It’s going to be a gold medal match for the ages.

JJ tapes and re-tapes his stick, bouncing his feet against the ground. Tensions are high in the locker room. Hollander does his best to hype up the team, then hands the reins to his husband.

Rozanov’s icy eyes sweep across the room, assessing the team. Forcing the panicked rookies to meet his gaze.

“When I was young,” Rozanov says, quietly, “I wanted to win a gold medal in Russian red.” He hums, looking down at his hands. “Bring it home to Moscow. Show it off in Kremlin.”

He looks up. “Today, I want to win gold with my husband – the husband Canada lets me to love. I want to bring it home, not because I must, but because I love Canada. And Canada loves me.”

He’s yelling now — surging. “So let’s. Fucking. Win.”

The team *roars*.

*

They’re up by one in the middle of the third. Nine minutes stand on the clock, slowly ticking away.

Russia is starting to play dirty. They can’t handle the coordinated chaos of Hollander and Rozanov on the power-play, or the relentless assault of Canada’s depth at center.

Rozanov is in rare form — weaving the puck through defenders with brutal efficiency, chirping in Russian. Spitting blood when he gets hit, relishing the chance to drop his gloves. He never throws the first punch – too smart to get thrown out when Canada needs him.

Shane, for his part, is *everywhere*. Materializing to block a shot, then slipping into the crease and tipping in a goal.

JJ may not know Russian. But he knows *fear*. And the Russians are *terrified* of Shane Hollander.

Maybe that’s what pushes them over the edge. Maybe it’s premeditated. In any case, with three minutes left, a Russian forward trips Shane. The offending player – Petrov – skates past Shane, who’s still on the ground. Mutters something, then spits.

Right on Shane’s laces.

Shane closes his eyes. He doesn’t look sad. Just... resigned.

Vaguely, JJ is aware of Ilya climbing the bench. He’s screaming in Russian, cursing wildly.

Shane won’t take the bait. Rozanov will, though. He’ll defend Shane, even if it means getting himself thrown out. Ejected from the rink entirely. And Shane will win a gold medal without his husband, slurs echoing in his head.

He forgives everyone. Does not mean you deserve it.

Ilya is right. JJ doesn’t deserve it.

But... maybe he can try.

Snapping into motion, JJ skates forward. Grabs Petrov by his collar and slams him into the boards. Throws his gloves off. Fast. Faster than the Russian can ditch his. Faster than anyone can stop him.

JJ slams his fist into Petrov's face, relishing the sick, wet sound of bones crunching under skin. Again. Again. Again. Until the ref is there, pulling him off and sending him to the tunnel.

JJ spits, skating toward the bench. It's worth the ejection – worth everything, to see Shane smile at him the way he used to. Before the trip. Before everything.

Rozanov offers him a handshake as he passes.

*

Ilya roars, pulling Shane into a hug. Barrett piles on, then Hayes. Soon, the whole roster is there, screaming and cheering. Confetti falls from the ceiling, blanketing them in red and white.

It looks like Ilya imagined all those years ago, skating on a street rink in Moscow. Red and white jerseys. Gold medals. Hockey sticks.

It feels *so* different.

2. Skills Don't Age

Sam Johnson strolls out of the Shark's locker room, pulling on the last of his gear.

A reporter chases after him, media bag bouncing on his back. "Hey, Johnny! Got time for a few questions?"

The lanky brunette grins, coming to a stop. "For you, Pete? Always."

Pete holds up a mic. "Big game today against the Bears. Even bigger game next week, hosting the Centaurs at home. How are you handling this stretch of high pressure matchups?"

Johnson shrugs. "We're not too worried about the Bears. I'll put a few in the net and we'll walk away with a win."

The reporter leans in, picking up on his obvious omission. "And the Centaurs?"

Johnson smiles. "Not too worried about them, either."

Pete blinks. "I mean – they're a fairly commanding team." He looks down, checking his notes. "Hollander and Rozanov lead the scoring race, with high numbers of assists —"

Johnson taps his stick on the ground, smirking. "I think the Golden Couple is overrated. Had some good seasons, sure. But they're getting older, sloppy with their passes... there'll be a new scoring leader by the end of the season."

"Will it be you?"

Johnson winks. "We'll see."

*

@hollanovgods

does Johnson have a death wish or humiliation kink? you decide!

@ilyascigarette

Reply to @hollanovgods: fr what the fuck was that interview

@bisexualhockeyluvr

the problem with sam johnson is that he has a Rozanov sized ego without Rozanov's skill and whimsy

@liartoldyouthis

Reply to @bisexualhockeyluvr: also ilya would've had the balls to say he'll win the scoring race

@hollanovgods

Reply to @bisexualhockeyluvr: fr johnson wants to be him so fucking bad

@roz81 

working on getting older and sloppier

[Video shows Shane and Ilya on their home ice-rink, running drills and slamming in precision shots.]

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer ✓

Retweet @roz81: Sunday rituals.

@ilyascigarette

Reply to @roz81: johnson bbg you are so cooked

@ottawacents ✓

we're looking forward to our match with San Jose next week! see you soon, California.

@roz81 ✓

Reply to @roz81: harris u messy bitch

*

Rozanov and Hollander have been fucking *insufferable* since the interview. Practice runs late all week.

Boodram heaves, trying to catch his breath after a brutal set of sprints. "You," he chokes out, pointing at Rozanov, "are a psychopath."

Roz laughs. Somehow, he's only slightly winded.

"How are you not exhausted?" Barrett asks, leaning against the boards.

Hollander skates up, squeezing water out of a waiting bottle. "Roz and I run extra drills at home."

"Every day?" Bood asks.

Rozanov rolls his eyes. "Shane is — how do you say, obsessed?"

*

Roz grabs Haas on the plane, dragging him into a spare row. "We have a date with the new Mission Impossible movie, rookie."

Hollander rolls his eyes, taking a seat next to Barrett. It's not *entirely* usual for the first husbands of hockey to sit apart, but it's not uncommon enough to raise Barrett's suspicions.

Four hours later, Barrett stares at Roz, drawing a thumb across his neck. To his right, Hollander leans over an iPad. "San Jose is weak on their left in the second. If we —"

Across the aisle, Rozanov winks.

*

San Jose's arena is packed. There are, to Barrett's amusement, at least as many Centaurs jerseys as there are Sharks.

The opening face-off is between Roz and Johnson — an ego boost Rozanov simply does *not* need.

Rozanov grins, staring down the younger man. "So, I am old, yes?"

Johnson hums. Then, because he is, apparently, an idiot with a death wish, he speaks.

"Actually, I said old *and* sloppy."

Rozanov nods. "Cannot forget sloppy. Is crucial, I agree."

The puck drops. With lightning speed, Roz tips it out of the circle and onto Troy's waiting stick.

By the time the lines switch off, Rozanov has two shots under his belt. Hollander claps him on the back, heading onto the ice. Barrett shudders. He can't imagine surviving their first line — led by Ilya Rozanov — only to be faced with *Shane Hollander*.

It takes Hollzy less than a minute to knock in the first goal of the game. He moves with deadly precision, breaking ankles and dancing his way to the crease.

Three periods in, the Sharks are losing 5-1. They're suitably humiliated, casting dirty looks at Johnson on the bench.

When the buzzer sounds, the Centaurs surround their captains, cheering.

*

Later, at a random dive bar in San Jose, Boodram raises a glass.

"Here's to winning – and to never, *ever* having to play against Roz and Hollzy."

3. Shooters Don't Miss

Hayden flips a burger, grimacing when he sees burn marks.

He'd usually let it go. Slam it on a plate and call it a day.

Unfortunately, his best friend married Ilya *fucking* Rozanov – consummate critic of everything under the sun. Hayden tosses the patty to their dog and starts again.

Shane steps into the yard, staring at his phone. He seems reserved today – quiet.

“You all good, buddy?” Hayden asks, shaping a new burger.

“Have you seen this?” Shane responds. He passes Hayden his phone. It’s game footage. On screen, Rozanov and Adams fight for a puck. Rozanov falls – Adams ends up with a goal.

It’s not a *bad* fall. Not by hockey standards. Roz walks away with a couple bruised ribs and a chipped tooth.

Hayden hands the phone back. “Yeah, sure. This was last week, right?”

“Yeah, last week.” Shane watches the clip again, obsessed. “I think it was a dirty hit.”

“They’re both going for the puck, Shane. It’s hockey.”

“Just watch, okay?” Shane holds the phone up, pausing it midway through the sequence. “See that? That’s a skate edge. Adams tripped Roz on the turn.”

Hayden does not, in fact, *see that*. However, he is painfully aware that Shane Hollander sees hockey with different eyes than the rest of humanity. So, he’s not going to contradict him. He pleads the fifth and checks the grill.

“What’s it matter, anyway?” Hayden asks, standing. “Game’s over; you won.”

Shane sets down his phone. “Yeah, you’re right.”

He’s a terrible liar.

*

Troy likes playing the Devils. Their arena is close to New York -- beating them means a late night at The Kingfisher, running up Roz’s tab.

He expects an upbeat vibe in the locker room going into the game. And it is, for the most part. Rozanov bounces around, ribbing the guys and blasting Bad Bunny. Boodram and Hayes argue over a comic in the corner. The rookies swipe on Tinder, trying to find hook-ups for the night.

Everyone is in a good mood, except for Shane Hollander. Their Assistant Captain stares at his laces, tapping his foot on the ground.

“So,” Harris says, taking a seat next to Troy. “Any idea why Shane looks like Angry Arthur? Clenched fist and everything.”

Troy shakes his head. “None.”

*

The game gets off to a decent start. Rozanov leads a strong first five; he’s panting when he reaches the bench.

Hollander skates onto the ice, taking his husband's place at center.

Barrett nudges Roz. "What's his deal today?"

Rozanov grins. "You'll see."

Well, fuck. Absolutely *nothing* good starts with Rozanov grinning on the bench.

They make it through two unremarkable periods. And then Roz trips. One second, he's battling Adams for the puck, racing up the right side of the arena. The next, he's on the ice.

It doesn't *seem* like a dirty play.

Regardless, Hollander jumps the bench. He races over to Adams, slamming a punch into his jaw. The refs take a second to react — stunned, no doubt, by Hollander's uncharacteristic violence.

By the time they manage to pull Hollzy off Adams, the Devils' winger is missing a tooth.

The medical staff won't let Rozanov stand, so he watches from the ice, letting them tape up his ankle. Barrett shakes his head, turning to the jumbotron. The Devil's staff replay the confrontation in slow motion — hoping to prove it was a clean play.

Except... *There*.

Troy grabs Boodram, pointing at Adams' inner edge. "He *did* trip Roz. Look, right... there."

Boodram curses. "It looked clean. I would never have —"

"Same trip as last game," Rozanov interrupts. The medical staff around him frown; he keeps trying to lace up his skate. "Shane is not a fan."

The boys turn to stare at their Assistant Captain. Hollzy looks content in the penalty box, watching the game and shouting instructions. Like he expected to be there.

"That's why you were grinning," Barrett realizes. "You knew he'd do it again. You wanted Shane to defend you."

"Is sexy, no? Makes me want to fuck him."

"Aw, Roz, why'd you have to —"

"No sex comments during —"

"Need bleach for my —"

"You're so gross —"

4. Old Wounds Don't Heal

Irina Ilyinichna Hollander is terrifying, *thank you very much*.

She inherited Ilya's severe, Russian features and Svetlana's – her biological mother – infamous beauty. Not to mention, Ilya's on-ice attitude and Shane's hockey IQ.

Heir to a hockey dynasty, indeed.

*

Growing up, Irina is surrounded by men.

She loves hockey – has loved it since her skates first touched the ice. Girl's hockey infrastructure is lacking, so she plays with the boys.

She's small – tall for a girl, but not for a boy. She has to be twice as fast, twice as skilled, to make up for it and earn a place.

Whatever. Anything to be out on the ice, playing at the highest level.

People seem to expect her to grow out of hockey. They assess her long, dark hair – always carefully curled. The dark mascara on her lashes. Her taped earrings during games, They think she can't love the sport. Too girly. Too feminine.

They are *wrong*.

The national team starts scouting her when she's 14. They show up to an open practice and watch her slam pucks into the net.

Her dad smiles, following her line of sight into the rafters. "Don't get your hopes up," he says. "They're probably scouting for next year."

She sighs, staring. It's not fair. She could hold her own on the U-18 team. She deserves a spot, but they won't give it to her. Not until she's older. Tradition, or something stupid like that. She walks out of the arena, letting the door slam shut behind her.

An austere woman stands in the parking lot, smoking. She sees Irina looking – offers her a cigarette. Irina shakes her head.

"говорите по-русски?" *Do you speak Russian?*

"Да." Irina's brow knits. "Кто вы?"

The woman laughs, sticking out a hand. "Evgeniya Petrova."

"Irina Hollander."

Evgenia hands her a business card.

Евгения Петрова | Evgenia Petrova

Женская сборная России | Russian National Women's Hockey Team

“We will take you now,” Evengenia offers. “No waiting your turn, no rotting on the U-18 Team.”

Irina looks up, schooling her features into a mask of indifference. “Я не буду играть за страну, которую мои отцы не могут посетить.” *I won't play for a country my fathers cannot visit.*

Evengenia shrugs. “Tournaments are not held in Moscow. They can watch you play, when the time comes.” She hands Irina a binder. “We will offer Ilya amnesty. No propaganda charges, if you play for us.”

Her father could go *home*.

“I’ll think about it,” Irina says.

*

That night, Irina waits until Nikolai is asleep, then pulls out the binder.

She walks into her parent’s bedroom, climbing between them in bed – just like she used to when she was a little girl.

“Papa,” she starts. “I have to tell you something.”

Her father looks down at the binder. He recognizes the cyrillic lettering; his eyes widen with alarm. “Who gave you this?”

Her dad catches up, slowly making sense of the writing.

“There was a woman at practice today,” Irina admits. “The Russian coach. She offered me a spot on the national team. No waiting, no working through the ranks. Just the team, because I am good enough.”

She presses on, determined to get through it all before chaos breaks out. “She offered you amnesty, Papa. If I play, you can go home.”

Ilya closes his eyes. Mutters something. Shane reaches over to him, squeezing his shoulder. Irina thought they might be angry. They aren't. Just... sad.

“Irina,” Papa says, “I will never go home to Russia.”

“But I could do this,” she tries to insist. “I could make it safe –”

“I will never go back.”

She frowns, not understanding. “You miss it, don’t you?”

Papa nods. “Yes. I miss it very much. But to go back would be... like forgiving someone who is not sorry. Pretending it is fine. I will not do this. I will not send that message.”

She nods, sliding the binder off the bed. “Okay.”

Dad cuts in, pulling her close. “It’s an exciting opportunity, Ira. It’s so, so impressive that they want you. But it’s not right.”

Papa shakes his head. “Not right for me. But can be right for you, if you want it.”

Irina looks down, toying with her nails. “I don’t think so. You can’t – be gay there, right?”

“No,” Papa says, laughing at her naivety. “You cannot. You would have to be very careful. Not associate with us at games. Not say the wrong thing.”

Across the table, her dad seems to be having a heart attack, but manages to stay quiet. Irina shakes her head. “I don’t think it’s a good idea. I, um... I don’t think that would be safe for me, either.”

Her fathers blink. Shane moves first, taking her hands in his. “Honey, are you saying...”

“I’m gay,” Irina chokes out. “But I can hide it for a while if you want to go home, Papa. Really. Anything for you. Don’t say no because of me.”

Ilya leans in, pulling her into a hug. “I would say no for you a million times, Irinushka. Is my job. But I say no for me, too.”

“So it’s settled,” Shane surmises. “Irina plays for Canada. We become an even gayer, even more insufferable family. And, for once, someone in this family has the good sense to write off men.”

Ilya’s eyes shine. “Is truly the best news you can get, as a father. Knowing my precious daughter will never bother with stupid, ugly men.”

*

Three years later, Irina Hollander tries on her Olympic jersey for the first time. Her dad grins, running to get a camera.

She stares in the mirror, bursting with joy. But there’s a hint of sadness, too – one Papa seems to understand. He steps toward her, setting a hand on her shoulder.

“Is it strange to be sad?”

Ilya shakes his head. “No. I always am.”

“I’m proud to play for Canada. I’m grateful. But I wish I could play for Russia. Represent Grandma with more than just my name.”

Ilya straightens a stray curl in her hair. “You will always be Russian, солнышка. They cannot take it from you, just like they cannot take it from me.”

*

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov stride into the Olympic arena. They're famous even in their fifties, having cemented their status as legends during their time with the Centaurs. The crowd roars when the camera catches sight of them.

Ilya, for his part, seems to relish the attention. He waves, jostling the sleeves of his custom Armani suit. Shane smiles at the crowd.

Irina's team wins easily – largely thanks to a dominant performance from the young center. She sinks three goals, starts two fights, and wins a crucial face-off in the third.

Shane and Ilya show up to every game. Nikolai, their youngest, is too young for the Olympics this time around, so they only have to keep track of one child. If his medal count is anything to go by, though, they'll be splitting time between Hockey and Figure Skating in four years time.

After weeks of brutal play, Canada is finally set to play Russia in the Gold Medal Match. Nikolai bursts into Shane and Ilya's room before the game, waving a plastic bag around.

"Whatever you think you're wearing, forget it." He pulls a shirt out of the bag. Shows off the front, then turns it around.

Ilya cackles. "Give to me."

*

Irina finds her family in the stands. They wave, grinning. Her dad is wearing a vintage Canada jersey -- likely from his time on the team. Papa is wearing a jersey, too. It's not one she recognizes.

He spins around, gesturing to the back. With a start, Irina realizes it's from his time on the Russian national team. His name and number are still on the back. The Russian crest has been replaced – covered with large, sewn-on maple leaves.

He turns back around. She squints. The cyrillic on the front has been modified. It reads:

русский, гей, и гордый

Russian, Gay, and Proud

She chokes up, imagining how this moment feels for her father. Watching his daughter play the team that abandoned him. The country that would've killed him for loving Shane.

She thinks about trying on her jersey – about what her father said. How they can't take their identity, or their past. He will always be Rozanov, star center of the Russian national team. They don't get to erase that.

Irina turns to face the opposing team. The puck drops.

She plays her fucking *heart* out.

The buzzer sounds, announcing Canada's victory to the world. Irina drops her stick and skates towards her teammates. Ella James slams into her, pulling her into a hug.

"Still want to do this?" She shouts, pulling off her helmet.

"Fuck yes," Irina screams back. She grabs Ella, pulling her in for a kiss.

*

@ilyascigarettes

leave it to a rozanov-hollander baby to come out in the wildest, most fanfic way ever

@hollanovlovesanya

i'm screaming i love this family sm

@irinahollandermarryme

irina hollander is gonna be more dominant at hockey than both her dads combined, but y'all ain't ready for that conversation

@puckwives

remember when y'all were bitching about nikolai not playing hockey like it was the end of the world? like irina is RIGHT THERE to continue the legacy

@roz81 

olympic champion AND good w the ladies. like father like daughter indeed

@hollzy81 

Reply to @roz81: dad plz shut the fuck up

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer 

Reply to @roz81: We're incredibly proud of our daughter, Irina, for her courage and leadership on (and off) the ice. See how easy it is to write a nice statement?

@nikolaiskates ✓

Reply to @roz81, @hollzy81, and @shanehollanderhockeyplayer: will you all plz stop tweeting at each other we're literally at dinner

5. Sequins Don't Discriminate

Nikolai Ilyich Hollander is born at 2:37AM. He screams his way into the world – angry at the cold air.

As far as Ilya can tell, he's been angry ever since.

Sometimes Nikolai is destructive. He breaks toys, argues with his sister, and gets into fights at school. More often, though, he's fiercely passionate. Protective. Loyal.

Media, friends, family... They expect him to be a hockey player. He has what it takes – the athleticism, the rage.

Thing is, Nikolai doesn't give a shit. Expectations – the fragile, dangerous ropes that govern Shane and Ilya – are meaningless to him.

Nikolai storms into the kitchen on a stormy July afternoon. He's five years old, and much shorter than his sister. He inherited Shane's lean, lithe frame.

Their son slams a drawing onto the table. "I want to do this."

Ilya leans in, trying to decipher the artwork. "Is that hockey? Kolya, you play hockey –"

"No!" Nikolai yells. "The other ice one!"

Shane steps forward, peering at the incoherent scribbles. "Figure skating?" He tries.

Their son nods. "Is that the one where they spin? I want to spin. It's so much *prettier* than hockey. Please, Dad?"

Shane meets Ilya's eyes. Ilya nods.

"Okay," Shane says. "Figure skating it is, kiddo. We'll have to get you different skates."

*

Nikolai is *obsessive*. He spends long hours on their frozen pond, mastering edge control. He stays outside after dusk – long after his sister seeks refuge inside. Shane stays out with him. Irina is so much like Ilya – brash and gifted. Nikolai is like Shane. He needs to perfect everything he touches.

Sometimes, Shane feels guilty. He watches his son practice bunny hops with the ferocity of an Olympian and wonders if it's fault. If he somehow poisoned him – passed down whatever gene that makes him *different*.

In some ways, he's glad Nikolai is a figure skater. The sport lends itself to obsession. There are no foreign variables – no rogue teammates. With enough practice, Nikolai will excel. He will be great, because he demands it of himself.

It makes him worry, though. After a bad game, Shane could vanish into a crowd of jerseys, surrounded by friends. Nikolai will always stand alone. Just him and the ice.

*

Ilya and Shane are, probably, overly involved parents. It's easier with Irina. They understand the hockey system – trust the coaches, understand the path. They know fucking *nothing* about figure skating.

So they learn. Possibly, they learn *too* much.

Shane becomes a walking encyclopedia of technical complexity scores. Ilya learns how to rhinestone costumes and spends his retirement gluing gems to leotards.

They sit together in the stands at every competition – always overdressed, always causing a stir. Shane discovers new depths of terror and pride as Nikolai goes from jumping doubles, to triples, to fucking *quads*.

Shane exhales, letting go of Ilya's hand. "That should not be physically possible. I can't believe he landed that."

"I can," Ilya says, because apparently it really *would* kill him to be agreeable for once in his fucking life.

Shane nudges Irina. "Were you watching?"

Their terrifying teenage daughter rolls her eyes. "Yes, I was watching. He landed the quad. Very impressive, or whatever."

Shane and Ilya leave her in the stands and head down to the ice, eager to congratulate Nikolai. They don't bother knocking on his dressing room door. He finished less than two minutes ago, it's not like he'll be –

There is a naked woman in their son's room.

It's disturbing on several levels. First, and most notably, because their son is gay. Figure skating, rhinestones... Shane is not known for his gaydar, but he's not an idiot, either.

Nikolai sighs, tossing his guest a shirt. She smiles at Shane and Ilya, looking pained. "Right, well. I'm going to go."

Shane stares at his son. To his left, Ilya is bent over, dying of laughter. “I didn’t know you had it in you,” he says, struggling to breathe.

“Nikolai,” Shane says, “aren’t you gay?”

That *really* sets Ilya off. His husband is cackling – laughing so hard he’s holding up his hand in surrender. “You think he is *gay*?”

Shane nods, waving his hands. He’s lost. “You know, figure skating, the…” He trails off.

Nikolai rolls his eyes. “Okay, toxic masculinity police.”

“Oh come on,” Ilya says, shoving their son playfully. “You know he is very bad at this.”

“Fine,” Nikolai steps forward, giving Shane a hug. “Dad, I’m straight. I also like spinning in the air, like, really fucking fast. I hope you can see how that has nothing to do with my love of tits. In fact, considering this is a girl’s sport, it gives some really great access –”

“Enough,” Shane yells. “Please, for the love of Christ. Do not finish that sentence.”

*

@nikolaiskates 

it has come to my attention that literally everyone thinks im gay. to be clear i <3 pussy i love bitches i should be running peta

@nikolaiskates 

Reply to @nikolaiskates: ps. if you don’t go down on your girl you’re a loser

DM: @shanehollanderhockeyplayer to @roz81

Do we make him delete it?

DM: @roz81 to @shanehollanderhockeyplayer

he is not wrong. does make you a loser.

DM: @shanehollanderhockeyplayer to @roz81

Pretty bad look for sponsorships.

DM: @roz81 to @shanehollanderhockeyplayer

cannot be worse than me. and i had sponsors

DM: @shanehollanderhockeyplayer to @roz81

I guess.

+1 Stars Always Shine

Their granddaughter is born on Christmas morning. She's a tiny miracle with big, brown eyes and a button nose.

Shane and Ilya creep into the hospital room, not wanting to intrude. Nikolai's wife smiles softly, waving. They check in on her first. Ilya hands her a tupperware full of the blinis she likes. Shane passes her a blanket from the cottage – the one she favors when she's there.

Nikolai smiles, watching them dote on his wife. He got married young -- shocking both Shane and Ilya. They'd expected Nikolai to be a playboy. Maybe he would've been – if it weren't for Ana.

Hard to say. Nikolai was never one for expectations.

Ana strolled into Nikolai's life during the Olympics – an Eteri girl, slated for Olympic gold. She landed four quads in her free skate; Nikolai was instantly obsessed. She made it work for it, like a good Slavic girl, but in the end, she agreed to marry him.

Shane and Ilya adore her.

Irina slips into the room, carrying a change of clothes and other essentials. She winks at her sister-in-law. "How's the pain?"

Ana mutters something about knives and torture. Sounds about right.

Nikolai hands Shane his granddaughter. He looks down, staring at her soft, sleeping face. Ilya leans into his side, smiling.

Tomorrow, they have a video interview with ESPN. Tomorrow, they'll be Rozanov and Hollander.

Olympic greats. Hall of Famers. Legends.

Today, they're just Shane and Ilya. Grandparents. Fathers. After years of hiding, it's a joy to have a choice.

Chapter End Notes

i have an exam on thursday pray for me lolllll. have thought a LOT about heated rivalry lately and very little about probability theory and integrals. will probs post again on friday or this weekend, getting back into a regular swing. not sure exactly what, but will ofc feature the boys!

as always thank you thank you thank YOU for being so kind about all my writing it is so motivating you have no idea

End Notes

thank you SO SO SO SO much for your love on this series. i can't even put into words how grateful i am!!!! the love and kudos and comments is just. the kindest thing ever.

i know this one is a little different. hope you still like it!

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