

Guardian

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Guardian

by [Caraphernellic](#)

Summary

After a violent incident, Shane Hollander's management team and parents hire him a bodyguard.

Enter Ilya Rozanov.

Chapter 1: Prologue

Shane fidgets with the sleeves of his shirt. He feels exposed and embarrassed, like a kid about to meet his new babysitter.

Really, isn't that what a bodyguard is?

"A lot of athletes have security detail." His mom reminds him. "It's normal, Shane."

"Yeah, but do their moms pick them out?" Shane grumbles. In reality, it had been both of his parents and his management team that conducted the interviews, but he felt like being petty.

It had been a hard few weeks since the incident, and he'd been on edge pretty much ever since. Which maybe was exactly the point of them hiring a bodyguard. Security detail. Whatever.

Then- Four weeks ago

Shane rarely went out. He just didn't prefer it. During the hockey season, his schedule simply didn't allow for it anyway, and after, he liked to use his time to relax and recharge for the next season.

However, this time, they were coming off of their second straight Stanley Cup win and his teammates had begged him to come out with them.

It was some frou-frou nightclub outside of Montreal. Predictably, Shane was not enjoying himself. The place was crowded, sticky, and smelled of beer and cigarettes and the heady combo of sweat and perfume.

There were a decent amount of people here who recognized Shane and his teammates, and so part of the night was spent signing items and taking photos. Shane was also sure there were plenty of candid photos of them being taken and shared to social media as well.

It was another reason why Shane didn't really care to go out in settings like this- it made him feel like a bug under a microscope.

He didn't drink often, and tonight was no exception, so he was perhaps the only sober one of his friends. He wanted to leave already, but would that make him a bad teammate? He was the captain, after all.

Instead, he opted to get some air, take a breather and regroup before he headed back into the noise and the crowd and the lights. A back door led him to an alley. Perfect, a quiet spot to calm down and let his facade fall away before he went back inside to play pretend.

He leaned against the cool brick of the wall for a while, staring up at the sky and just measuring his breathing. Sometimes he wished he wasn't like this, so different from everyone. An outsider, an alien. A wet blanket who didn't like alcohol or crowds and had to physically separate himself just to function.

A loser.

He sighed and pushed off from the wall, turning around to head back inside.

It was because his back was turned that he never saw it coming. He was suddenly and violently shoved to the ground. It was so unexpected that his reflexes didn't have much time to react, and he hit the ground hard, palms and chest first. Then the kicks rained down on him swiftly and sharply, mostly his ribs and back. He tried to protect his head and neck but one caught him in the cheekbone. More than one person, for sure.

Someone else was fumbling in his pockets and took his wallet and phone. Then his watch. They even took his shoes- they were expensive running shoes but they'd been a brand gift.

Then all at once, it stopped. Footsteps running away. "Thanks Shane." One of them called back.

They knew who he was. They probably robbed him because of who he was. They knew he'd have money.

He should get up now. The ground was so filthy. But Shane was in so much pain, all he could do was stay face down and try to breathe. His ribs ached fiercely. His cheekbone throbbed. At least this wasn't during the season, he was grateful for that.

After an indefinite amount of time, he sat up slowly.

And he got up off the ground.

Present day

Shane shook his head as if it would clear the bad memories. His mom squeezed his arm in a show of support.

Finally, the door swung open and a man stepped inside. Tall, with curly blonde hair. He closed the door and turned around and Shane saw his face properly. He was extremely handsome. Shane's cheeks flushed without his permission.

His mom stood up and offered her hand. "It's good to see you again, Mr. Rozanov."

"Please, call me Ilya." He said, his English accented. Russian, it sounded like. "You must be Shane Hollander." He said, turning his attention to where Shane still sat.

Shane stood up awkwardly. "Um, yes, hi." They shook hands. Ilya's hands were huge and dwarfed Shane's. He still felt hot and nervous and stupid even though he hadn't done anything. He was suddenly hyper-aware of the black eye that hadn't yet faded completely.

They talked business and they signed contracts. Shane didn't have to do a lot of talking, which was great, but also not so great because then he didn't have much to do but sit there uncomfortably. Most of this had been discussed with him and Ilya already, separately. This was just the formal initiation of their partnership.

After a painful hour, everything was completed and Shane Hollander officially had a bodyguard.

Chapter 2: Chapter One

The only bright spot was that it wasn't like Ilya Rozanov had been hired to watch him 24/7. Shane was pretty much covered during most of hockey season by traveling with the team. That was safe, and there were rules and regulations in place.

Ilya was hired for the extra things- brand deal shoots, appearances, etc.

Unfortunately for Shane, it was currently the off season, which meant the extra things were in full swing right now. In fact, he had a brand deal commercial the following week.

He had spent most of the last four weeks since the incident holed up in his cabin. Not that that was really out of the ordinary anyway, but still. This meeting at his management team's offices and the brand deal would be his first few times out of his house since he was released from the hospital.

The aftermath of him being robbed was almost as bad as the ordeal itself. The chaos that ensued at the club, the police and an ambulance being called, the media frenzy afterward. Shane was utterly exhausted by the social obligations that had followed- responding to texts, emails from reporters, making statements to the league.

He was robbed and beaten and everyone knew about it. Shane Hollander the hockey star had been shoved to the ground in a back alley and made a fool of. Maybe no one else thought that, but Shane himself did.

~

Ilya was picking him up and bringing him to his shoot today. Shane was nervous for a host of reasons.

When Ilya knocked, Shane was surprised. He thought maybe the man would text him that he was outside or something.

“Is Rozanov!” The man calls through the door. Shane has cameras, he can see him, but he would’ve known who it was anyway.

Shane opens the door. “You didn’t have to walk me to the car.”

“Is my job.”

As if Shane was going to get mugged on his way to the driveway. He bites back a sigh and follows Ilya- Rozanov, apparently he likes to be called by his last name- to the car. He’s surprised again when the other man opens the passenger door for him.

The inside of the vehicle smells like a mixture of Rozanov’s cologne and cigarettes.

“Music?” Rozanov asks. “Can connect your phone.”

Shane connects his phone and puts on a lofi beats playlist. It calms him. Rozanov gives him an almost disbelieving look but doesn’t say anything and finally, they’re on their way to Shane’s shoot.

Today, the shoot is a commercial for a brand partnership with a sugar free, plant-based protein bar. He would be in front of the camera with hot lights projected on him for hours. Realistically, what was Rozanov going to do during that time? What threats could there really be?

They arrive at the location and Shane is led straight to hair and makeup. They put gel in his hair and powder on his face and a slight amount of concealer for the bruising that barely lingers around his eye.

“I heard what happened, I’m so sorry.” The makeup artist says.

“You should see the other guy.” Shane says, and everyone in the room gives a light chuckle, and Shane feels proud.

As expected, the day is long. He memorized his lines, but there were still multiple takes with his hair or the product in his hand turned this way or that. Rozanov stood in the back or sat on a stool in the corner of the room the entire day. Shane wondered what he was thinking.

When they were back in the car, Rozanov offered him the option to connect his phone again, but this time Shane declined. The poor guy just sat and watched Shane do the same thing over and over again for hours, the least he could do was let him listen to his own music.

Shane leaned his head against the cool window and closed his eyes.

“You okay?” Rozanov asks.

“I’m fine, just a long day.”

“You need food.”

“I have food at home.” Shane says. He has a meal prepped container full of baked chicken and vegetables waiting for him.

Rozanov nods and the rest of the drive is silent aside from the low hum of the radio.

When they get back to Shane’s cabin, Rozanov gets out to once again escort Shane to the door. When they’re a few steps away, he lays a hand on Shane’s shoulder and Shane flinches hard.

Nothing about right now is the same as that night, but the touch to his upper back brought him back to being shoved, even if only for a flicker of a second.

Rozanov must realize it, because he moves his hand immediately, a light touch to his lower back and a soft apology.

“It’s fine.” Shane says quickly, embarrassed at his reaction.

“I’ll see you next time, Hollander.” Rozanov says when Shane has his front door unlocked.

“Goodbye. Goodnight.” Shane says. He closes the door.

“Don’t forget to lock it!” Rozanov calls. Shane rolls his eyes but complies.

~

“He was perfectly nice mom. It’s not like we were hanging out, I was filming the commercial.” Shane tells his mom over the phone. He eats a bite of his broccoli.

“I know honey but I just wanted to make sure it went okay.”

Shane needs to remember that his parents had suffered from his incident too, in their own way. His mom is just worried.

“It was good.” He assures her. “Rozanov was nice. He walked me to the door and everything.” That sounds like Shane is describing a date or something. His cheeks flush and he’s glad his mom can’t see him right now. “Anyway, I should go. I’m pretty tired mom. Long day.”

“Alright, well don’t forget about the energy drink shoot next week! Ilya already knows about it.”

“I know.”

“Goodnight, love you.”

“Goodnight mom.” Shane hangs up and goes about his night routine and is in bed by 9pm. He resolutely does *not* think about Rozanov’s large hand on his lower back.

Chapter 3: Chapter Two

“Good morning Hollander.” Rozanov leans against the wall of his porch, looking far too handsome for the early hour.

“Good morning.” Shane greets.

“Ready to smile pretty for camera and sell nasty energy drink?” Rozanov asks cheerily.

“It’s not-” Shane cuts himself off. Honestly, the energy drinks aren’t that great.

“You can connect your boring music again.” Rozanov tells him when they get in the car.

Shane shoots him a dirty look. “It’s not *boring*, it’s relaxing.”

Rozanov fakes a snore. “Wake me up if I drift off road.” Jeez, this guy has a lot of jokes this morning. Shane sighs and connects the lofi beats again just to spite the other man.

This shoot is actually slated for a little less time than the protein bar one, and he gets a 30 minute break in between. He sits in the green room and eats a dry turkey sandwich. Rozanov, of course, joins him. He piles his own plate with something from almost every item in the food spread. Shane has no idea how the man stays so fit if he eats like that.

Not that he’s noticed how fit he is, or anything. He was just making sure his bodyguard was physically strong enough in case something ever did happen. Obviously.

“You should eat more.” Rozanov comments, nodding at his now empty plate.

“I’m on a strict performance diet.”

“One turkey sandwich per day?” Rozanov raises an eyebrow.

“No. This is good enough for now. It’s called lunch.”

“You work hard. Should fuel body.”

“I’ve got it under control, thank you.” Shane says politely.

Rozanov doesn’t say anything else, but he looks at Shane for a moment longer.

~

“You do not like this.” Rozanov comments on the way home a few hours later.

“Hm?” Shane hums. He’s exhausted, these things always take a lot out of him.

“These…” He waves his hand in the air. “Ah, photos and videos.”

“Oh, brand shoots? They’re okay. I know I’m lucky. They’re just a lot of work, they make me tired.” Shane responds.

“You do these things and you do hockey. What do you do for fun?”

“What do you mean?” Hockey is fun. Hockey is his life.

“You have girlfriend, or friends?” Rozanov asks.

“I have friends.” Shane insists. Just, the last time he’d gone out them, well... “I’m a professional athlete. My life is different from other people’s. I don’t mind. I love hockey. I’m living my dream.”

Rozanov nods. “I figure we get to know each other. Since we spend time together.”

“What do *you* do for fun?” Shane retorts.

“Drink. Go to party. Have sex.” He shrugs.

Shane gawks at him.

“I used to play hockey, you know.” Rozanov continues, ignoring Shane’s look of disbelief.

“Really?” Shane asks, suddenly more interested.

“Da. Until I had accident, hurt leg, then-” He snaps his fingers. “No more hockey.”

“I’m sorry. Did you get hurt while playing?” Shane asks.

Rozanov shakes his head but doesn’t elaborate.

This time, he doesn’t put his hand on Shane’s shoulder again when he walks him to his door. He doesn’t put his hand on Shane’s back either, and Shane tells himself that he’s not disappointed.

“You look pretty today, but drink was gross. I drink one while I wait for you.”

“Goodnight, Rozanov.” Shane ignores his comments.

“Goodnight Hollander!”

~

Today, Shane has a photo shoot for an athletic wear brand, no commercial.

He’s trying to focus, but he’s pretty sure Rozanov is flirting with some of the lighting experts, and it’s distracting.

Not for any other reason than he’s supposed to be watching for threats, right? He’s getting paid to stare at Shane, or whatever.

“Shane?”

Shane looks over at the camera. “Sorry. Let’s go again?”

~

In the second week of August, Shane’s fears come true when he is scheduled for a shoot for Rolex. That’s not the problem. The problem is their concept for the shoot is that the photos will look like ‘candid’ of Shane out at a bar.

It doesn’t matter that it will all be fake and simulated.

“It’s no big deal. I’m fine.” Shane lies to his parents on the phone.

“It’s no big deal.” He lies to Hayden through text message.

“I’m fine.” He tells Rozanov the day of.

“Could cancel.” Rozanov fakes a cough. “Say you are sick.”

“That’s not really how this works. It’s a contract. I’m legally obligated to do this. It’ll be fine, it’s all fake anyway.” Shane hadn’t even been thinking of the shoot, he’d signed on for it when they were still in the playoffs, before everything happened. It was just bad luck, a nasty coincidence.

They put Shane in a nice suit and he feels bad that he’s basically sweating through it. At least the lights are dim enough that they won’t be able to tell.

The set for the fake bar is a lot nicer than the place Shane was in that night where it all happened, but that doesn’t really matter. The flashing lights and the crowd feel the same. He does his poses, pretending to drink from a glass tumbler of amber liquid, reaching over the bar top, etc.

He feels sick.

When the call comes out for a twenty minute break, he feels like he could collapse with relief. His legs feel like gelatin and his hands are cold and clammy. He hopes the photos are turning out okay.

Shane makes a beeline for the bathroom for more privacy than the green room for the shoot.

“We should stop the shoot.” Rozanov tells him, following him in.

“I’m fine.” Shane says weakly.

“Hollander. You are having panic attack.”

His breath is coming in rough gasps now. No, not here, not in front of Rozanov.

“Is okay. Deep breaths.”

Shane’s hand flies to his chest. “I-I can’t.”

“You can.” Rozanov says calmly. He begins walking away and Shane assumes he’s leaving, but he just locks the door. Then he carefully takes Shane’s other hand and places it on his own chest, leaving his hand there to anchor it. “Feel. Match me.”

Shane tries, his breath stuttering in his chest. He’s making awful wheezing noises that somewhere in his brain, he’s sure he will feel embarrassed about later. Rozanov squeezes his hand lightly and it actually helps. The weight of his hand on Shane’s is grounding.

“Good.” Rozanov praises. The look on his face isn’t pity, it’s actually more like sympathy.

After a few more minutes, the vice grip on his chest loosens, and his breaths come easier. “Thanks.” He says, not meeting Rozanov’s eyes.

“Don’t mention it.” Ilya says breezily, stepping out of Shane’s space and letting go of his hand.

“I guess we should go back out there.”

“Da. They might think you stole watch.” Rozanov quips, gesturing to the Rolex still on Shane’s wrist from the shoot.

Shane rolls his eyes, but he’s secretly glad that Rozanov is letting him off the hook after what just transpired between them. He unlocks the door and holds it open for Shane. “C’mon, Mr. Rolex.”

Chapter 4: Chapter Three

“What’s he like?” Hayden asks him.

“Who?” Shane asks, distracted. They’re playing around on Shane’s private rink at the cabin.

“Your bodyguard!” Hayden says, like it should be obvious. “The scary Russian guy.”

“He’s not scary.” Shane says automatically. “He’s...fine. Kind of a smartass.” He flings a puck into the net.

“That’s it? You’re famous enough to have a bodyguard and that’s all I get?” Hayden complains.

“It’s not like I wanted one, Hayden.” Shane reminds him, and his friend has the decency to look guilty.

“I know, I’m sorry.” Hayden apologizes. “I miss you.” He says suddenly.

Now Shane is the one who feels guilty. “I know. I’m sorry. There’s just been a lot going on.”

“I know. I just want you to remember to have fun once in a while, okay? It’s not good for you to work all the time and hole up alone in this place.”

Shane is about to argue that he sees his parents all the time when Hayden cuts him off. “Your mom and dad living down the road does *not* count.”

“I’ll remember that, okay? I’ll get out of my own head, I promise.”

Hayden nods, but Shane can tell that he doesn't believe him.

~

Shane has spent too much time thinking about Rozanov. The man is unlike anyone that Shane has ever met. He's bitchy, and he cracks jokes that some people might find offensive, but he also seems like he *actually* cares about Shane. And then there was the way he'd helped him out of a panic attack.

Also, the undeniable fact that he's very handsome. Shane has noticed, he's only human. That doesn't mean anything.

Shane will only see him one more time before the 2016/2017 hockey season begins. He has nothing else scheduled for the rest of August, and just one shoot for a magazine spread in early September right before pre-season starts.

The end of summer comes and goes without much fanfare, the last of the truly warm days fizzling out like a sparkler. It's almost time for Shane to leave the cottage and get back out into the world. Normally, he looks forward to it, because it means another season of hockey. This time though, he's a little apprehensive.

The magazine shoot comes and goes. The hockey season starts. Shane is thrown back into the world of skates and sticks and no free time. *His* world.

Shane feels more sure of himself here. He doesn't feel the same slightly lost, scared feeling that he's been feeling all summer. The feeling of being out of his element.

Until-

During one of their first few home games, he sees Ilya Rozanov in the stands.

It almost distracts him, for a moment, but he needs to focus on the game.

“What are you doing here?” He asks Rozanov later, after they’ve finished the game- they won- and he’s changed back into street clothes.

“Hello to you too, Hollander.”

Shane realizes that maybe he sounded rude. “Sorry.” He says quickly. They start walking down the hallway together toward the parking lot.

“I told you, I like hockey.” He shrugs. “I would probably be better than you, if I still play.”

Shane looks affronted. “Probably *not*.”

“Guess we will never know.” Rozanov smirks.

Shane realizes that he’s starting to feel a little bit like he did this summer- confused, like his blood is buzzing in his veins, like he’s a puzzle that’s been put together with some pieces missing.

“What do you do for fun, after game?”

“I usually go home.”

“You win game, and you just go home?”

Shane nods.

“Hollander, that is so boring.”

“I don’t care. I’m a professional, Rozanov.” He snaps. He’s getting a little tired of Rozanov always calling him boring. “Actually you know what, I’m not boring. I know how to have fun.”

“Don’t believe you.” Rozanov fake yawns.

As if on cue, “Hey, Hollander, Club 81, you in?” One of his teammates, J.J., calls as they pass by in the hall.

Shane glances back at his bodyguard, then to his teammate. “Yeah, I’m in.” He’ll show Rozanov.

J.J. whoops, “Alright, Captain’s in!”

“I meet you there.” Rozanov tells him, inviting himself. Good. Shane is going to show him just how *fun* he is.

He takes an Uber to the club after he showers and changes at his apartment. He’s wearing black jeans and the least ‘boring’ shirt he has, a fine black mesh that he’s honestly never worn before. He can’t even remember where or why he bought it.

He’s doing this. He’s facing a fear head on, ignoring the tremor in his hands and the memories in his mind. He’s going to show Rozanov and everyone else that he’s strong and capable and a fun person.

Shane goes right to the bar and orders a mixed drink off the menu. Beer is probably boring in Rozanov’s eyes. The drink is fruity and has a tiny umbrella in it, and actually, it doesn’t taste half bad.

He goes to stand with Hayden and a few of his other teammates and pretends that he's not looking for Rozanov.

The music is loud and thumping and the place is dim, but with flashing colorful lights. Shane decides to down his drink just to get a quick buzz to be able to tolerate being here. It works, because Shane barely drinks alcohol so his tolerance is low.

He heads to the bar to order another drink.

A hand lands on his lower back. Shane gets Déjà vu. He accepts his new drink from the bartender and resolutely does not look at Rozanov. Unfortunately, Rozanov snags the drink right from his hand and takes a sip.

"I'll take one of those too." He tells the bartender, and hands Shane his drink back. Shane finally looks up at him.

A magenta strobe light is crossing his face. He looks really good. Chiseled jaw, gelled curls, white button down with an animal print on it.

This is going to be a long night.

~

Shane has had three drinks. He's dancing. He doesn't know with who, but he's dancing, probably out of rhythm, but it's kind of fun.

Rozanov is watching him. He's been watching him all night. First at the game, and then now. His gaze has done just as much to make Shane feel intoxicated as the liquor has.

He breaks away from the dance floor and stumbles to the bar to order another. Rozanov is there in an instant, because of course he is. His calloused fingers find the space between where Shane's shirt and jeans meet, and it sets Shane's blood on fire. What is it about this man?

"You have had enough, da?" Rozanov says, less like a question and more like a statement.

"I'm having fun. Because I'm *not* boring." Shane says petulantly.

"He will have water." Rozanov says to the bartender.

Shane pouts. Then, "Why haven't you danced with anyone? Everyone here is looking at you."

"I'm busy. Looking out for hockey player with too many tiny umbrellas in his pocket." Oh yeah, Shane forgot that he kept all the little umbrellas from his drinks.

"So you would dance with *me* then." Shane blurts out.

"If you drink your whole glass, I will dance with you Hollander." Rozanov says, shoving the water into his hand. Shane feels like this whole night at the club, the other man has been more serious than Shane has ever seen him. He's not sure why.

He chugs the water, making eye contact with Rozanov the whole time, and then tugs him onto the dance floor. He should've thought this through, because he doesn't even really know how to dance with another person. Thankfully, Rozanov takes the lead.

The dance floor- the whole club, really- is pretty packed right now, and it's loud and sweaty and the air is heady, full of many scents. The tangy mixture of perfume, cologne, and stale beer all mingling together is making Shane too aware.

He realizes he's barely thought about when he was attacked all night, he was too focused on Rozanov and on proving himself to be 'fun'. Maybe there's a part of him that *knew* Rozanov was here, protecting him, and nothing bad would happen to him.

They're dancing close now, chest to chest, because the crowd of bodies is slowly pushing them together. He looks up to Rozanov to find him already looking back. His eyes are dark and intense. "Are you okay?" He asks.

Shane is...yeah, he's okay. He could use some air though, time away from the thick atmosphere they're currently engulfed in. "Bathroom." He says back, and isn't the least bit surprised when he pulls away and Rozanov immediately follows close behind.

He shoves open the door and immediately goes to the sink. He splashes some cold water on his face. He looks up into the mirror. His cheeks are flushed and his eyes are bright and glassy. His hair is mussed.

"Vomit?" Rozanov asks worriedly.

"No, I'm not going to throw up, I'm fine." He's tired though. He suddenly feels zapped of energy. He's tapped out for the day. "I should probably call it a night though." He says out loud. He pulls his phone out to order another Uber. The numbers blur only slightly in front of his eyes.

"Hollander." Shane looks up. "You are not taking car service. I take you home."

"No, it's fine."

"Hollander." The way his mouth shapes around the vowels of Shane's name fascinates him. And Shane is so tired, and confused, and he just wants to be unguarded for once. He lets himself sway into Rozanov's orbit. The other man catches him, of course he does.

He lets himself be led out to Rozanov's car. It's a flashy sports car, not the SUV with tinted windows he drives for the company when he's working with Shane.

When he gets inside, it smells like cigarette smoke and cologne and something else that's distinctly Rozanov that Shane has come to associate with the man.

Rozanov walks him upstairs and inside when they get to Shane's apartment. "Hollander."

Shane is slightly less buzzed by now but even sleepier, so the effect is still the same. He's sitting down at his counter island. He looks over to Rozanov at the mention of his name. "Hm?"

"I am sorry." Rozanov says, looking truly apologetic. "Maybe you don't remember this tomorrow, but I need to say this. You did not have to prove yourself to me or anyone by going to bar. I know you...have struggles with this. That is not what I meant when I joke about you not having fun after game."

That's actually very sweet. Shane is way too tired and full of alcohol for this. He looks balefully up at Rozanov. He lets his head drop forward to thunk against the man's hip and closes his eyes. He's rewarded with a large but gentle hand settling on the back of his neck.

"It'sokay." He slurs.

"I am stupid man sometimes. Speak before I think."

Shane just breathes in the other man's scent and lets himself think about how he wishes he could do this all of the time. Just be in Rozanov's arms. He can overthink it or push it down tomorrow, but tonight, he's going to indulge.

"Time for bed, sleepyhead."

And okay, maybe he pretends to be a little more useless than he actually is, so that Rozanov will help him take off his jacket and his shoes. He simply kneels in front of Shane and unties

his laces without question, then places them by the door exactly how Shane likes them.

“Drink lots of water.” Rozanov reminds him. “Goodnight, Hollander.”

It isn’t until Shane is brushing his teeth that he realizes something-

Rozanov wasn’t on the clock for this entire night.

Chapter 5: Chapter Four

Shane skates mindlessly and wishes for his practice rink at his cottage. He's using the rink at the arena in Montreal after hours, but it just isn't the same.

He did do some actual practice, but now he's just skating around for the pure enjoyment of it. Burning energy. They'd won again today, but Shane still felt disappointment in his gut. He'd foolishly hoped that Rozanov would be at the game again.

They haven't seen each other or spoken since the night at the bar weeks ago. Whatever. It doesn't even matter.

Shane is so lost in his own head that he almost misses the figure standing on the side of the rink. He does a double take and then skates up to him.

"Guess I miss game. Unless you are one man team now. Must be bad, no fans." Rozanov smirks, gesturing to the empty room.

Shane's breath catches. Had Rozanov actually wanted to come to the game? "Yeah, you missed it by about two hours."

"Sorry. Had other client. Ran longer than expected."

Oh.

Shane's never thought about the fact that Rozanov obviously had other clients. This was his job, after all. He wonders what the man is like with those other people. Does he act the same way that he does with Shane?

Shane just nods, unsure of what to say to that. “You should skate with me.” He says. “You said you used to play, right? So you can skate.”

“Ah.” Rozanov grimaces. “My leg...”

“Oh, right. Sorry.” Shane had momentarily forgotten that Rozanov said he had had a leg injury.

“I maybe can skate. A little. But no hockey.” Rozanov acquiesces.

“Are you sure? I don’t want you to get hurt.”

“Show me where skates are.”

Shane takes him to his extra skates in the locker room. They seem to fit okay. Then, he decides to be bold and take his hands when they get back to the ice. “Just in case.” He lies.

Rozanov humors him and lets Shane skate backward and tug him along by his hands. “You are much happier here, on the ice.” Rozanov observes.

Shane lets out a breath. “Yeah. It’s the one place where I truly feel like I can be myself. Where everything makes sense. Is that weird?”

Rozanov shakes his head no. Shane had half-expected him to make a quip about it, but he should know better by now. Rozanov is a secret softie.

“Is your leg doing okay?” Shane asks him, changing the subject away from himself.

“Da. Is not so bad. I just can’t go very fast or do anything fancy.”

Shane lets go of his hands. Rozanov can very clearly stand and skate on his own just fine. They skate side by side, not racing, just lazily looping around the rink.

Then, Rozanov breaks away and skates across, not going super fast, but faster than their pace. Shane assumes that again, it's because of his leg. He comes back to Shane and goes to stop and spray Shane with ice upon his halt, but he slips instead, crashing into Shane and sending them both to the ground.

Shane is surprised but he isn't hurt.

"Hollander! I am sorry." Rozanov breathes out. He's laid out on top of Shane and they're chest to chest, practically nose to nose. Shane is holding onto his elbows by instinct.

"I'm fine. Are you? Your leg?"

"Fine." Rozanov grimaces. "I am just..." He trails off.

"Rusty?" Shane suggests.

"Yes. I have rust."

"Mhm." Shane murmurs. He's staring at Rozanov's Cupid's bow. It's impossible not to, it's right in front of his face. He sees Rozanov track his eyes and then also flick his gaze to Shane's mouth.

The lights go out.

"Shit. We gotta go." Shane says.

They get off the rink and go back to the locker room, lit only by the emergency lighting. It's significantly more eerie in here like this, so whatever tension that was between them minutes before is now gone.

They get back into their street shoes and stare at each other awkwardly for a moment.

"I am not ready to go home." Rozanov announces. This is how they end up in Shane's car, in a car park in Montreal, just talking. Shane had insisted on his car despite Rozanov's complaints, because he didn't want to sit in cigarette smoke. Then, Rozanov forced him to go through the Sonic drive-thru. He is obnoxiously sipping from some kind of shake concoction, while Shane opted for the smallest size of their plain, fat-free vanilla. It was mostly so Rozanov didn't complain about him not eating enough.

"Tell me something." Shane says. "A secret." If they're going to sit here, might as well make it interesting. They've known each other for months now but they only know the bare minimum about one another.

"If I tell secret, you tell secret. Only fair." Rozanov says.

"Okay." Shane agrees, because he's right. His heart starts racing in anticipation.

Rozanov makes a contemplative noise. "I will never go back to Russia." He says after a minute of thinking.

"Do you miss it?" Shane asks.

"No." The way he says it is final. Shane decides not to ask anything else about it right now. "Your turn." Rozanov reminds him.

“Sometimes, I think I might not be straight.” Shane blurts out. Why did he say that? Of all secrets, why did he choose the most important one? What is it about the other man that make him want to be so brutally honest, when his whole life he’s kept things close to the chest?

“I am bisexual.” Rozanov announces easily. He glances at Shane. “I always know I like girls *and* boys. I look up word when I come to Canada. Bisexual.”

The air leaves Shane’s lungs. It’s a dizzying combination of the idea that maybe Rozanov could like him, and the feeling of relief that he’s not alone.

“Why did you become a bodyguard?” Shane asks. He’s deflecting, but he’s also curious about so many things.

“Pay is good.” Rozanov says. “I get to stare at pretty Canadian hockey player for money.”

“No, seriously.” Shane pushes.

“I like to help people. It got me out of Russia. And the pay part was not a lie.” He grins.

Shane rolls his eyes.

Rozanov’s phone rings, and he curses when he sees who is on the other line. He answers it and has a conversation in Russian. When he hangs up, he looks at Shane. “I have to go home.”

Shane wordlessly turns the car back on and starts driving back toward the arena where they left Rozanov’s car. The man is uncharacteristically quiet.

“Well...I’ll see you around.” Shane says awkwardly when they pull up outside of Rozanov’s car. It feels weird to say goodbye after such an intense night between them.

“Goodbye, Hollander.” Rozanov says shortly, and shuts the door. Then he’s gone, and Shane is alone.

The whole night feels like a fever dream, and the only proof that it was real are the empty shake cups sitting in his car.

Chapter 6: Chapter Five

Chapter Notes

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

Shane texts Rozanov the next day to check in. They don't normally do this, but Shane just has this weird feeling that the phone call last night wasn't something good. He doesn't get a response that day, but the following day Rozanov calls him.

He's surprised, but he answers. "Hello?"

"Everything okay? Do you have ad or something I am missing?" Rozanov asks.

"What? No, I was just asking if *you* were okay."

"Ah. You have heard."

Shane is becoming more and more confused. "Heard what? Did something actually happen? I just thought you seemed off after that phone call, so I wanted to check in..."

"My father is dead." Rozanov says.

Shane sucks in a sharp breath. "I'm so sorry."

"It is...he was sick for long time."

"Oh. Like cancer?"

"No, like dementia."

“That’s awful, I’m sorry.”

“I am back in Russia.” Oh, wow. After he had told Shane he would never go back. Shane remembers him saying he needed to go home, right after the phone call. He really meant home, apparently.

“Is it bad?” Shane asks quietly. He can hear the tension in Rozanov’s voice. It must be awful to be there at the funeral, when he never wanted to see any of those people again.

“It is not great.” The other man admits. “I pay for everything, but still I am bad guy. My brother has always hated me. My father and I hadn’t spoken in some time. He was mad at me, called me failure for no longer playing hockey, representing Russia. For leaving. Now we will never speak again.”

“Didn’t he know about your leg injury?”

Rozanov laughs but it’s bitter. “He forgot he was the one who caused it.”

Shane’s stomach feels like it’s full of lead. “Ilya...” He uses his first name unthinkingly.

“I was 17. He was confused. He thought I was an intruder, pushed me down stairs. I fall hard, break my femur. No more hockey.”

Shane wants to cry, but he’ll save it for after the phone call. He needs to be strong for Rozanov. “I’m really sorry that happened to you.” He says honestly. Then, “Is there anything I can do?”

“No. I’m sorry I say all this to you. I am a mess.”

“Don’t be sorry. We’re friends.”

Rozanov is quiet for a moment. “Da, we are friends. Thank you, Hollander.” Shane doesn’t even know what he’s being thanked for.

“Just do the best you can, and then come back, alright? I’m very famous you know, I need my bodyguard.” Shane reverts back to their usual banter, having a feeling that Rozanov needs that, right now.

“Yes Hollander, I come back to watch your sorry ass do cologne ad and drink ad and every ad on television.”

“Goodbye, Ilya.”

“Goodbye, Shane.”

~

After Rozanov comes back from Russia, it suddenly becomes normal for them to text each other. Apparently, so much so that people are starting to notice.

“So, who is it?” Hayden asks.

“What?”

“The person you’ve been texting lately. You’ve been smiling at your phone every time I’ve seen you.”

“No one.” Shane says automatically, his cheeks heating.

“You’re such a bad liar.” Hayden points out with a laugh, and Shane grimaces.

“It’s new.” He says, which is not technically a lie. This evolution of his relationship with Rozanov *is* new, as is his newfound realization that he may not be heterosexual. “I don’t want everyone to know yet.” He says softly.

Hayden looks at him for a long moment. “Okay. But when you’re ready, I’d like to be the first to know.”

“Okay.” Shane agrees. He exhales. He really needs to figure some things out before then.

~

Rozanov is in attendance of his game the night he gets laid out cold.

One moment he’s about to get the puck passed to him, and the next, he’s on the ice, confused and in pain.

He’s scared. He can’t feel his legs. His ears are ringing and he still hasn’t quite grasped what happened. He’s being put on the stretcher when he hears Rozanov behind the glass. He’s beating on it with his fists and yelling something.

“Tell him I’m okay.” Shane mumbles. “Tell him.”

“Keep your eyes open for me, Mr. Hollander.” The medic tells him.

Shane fades in and out as they put him in the ambulance. He tells them that they need to call his parents, but other than that he’s pretty sure he’s mumbling nonsense.

He has a concussion and a broken collarbone. His hockey season is officially over. He's pretty upset about that, but considering he thought for a little while that he was paralyzed, he's just glad it isn't worse.

He's gone his entire career so far without a serious injury, so it was bound to happen eventually.

His parents have gone to the hospital cafeteria when Rozanov shows up.

"Hiiii!" Shane is pretty drugged up at the moment.

"Hello." Rozanov says. He looks super serious. Shane is so happy to see him and his dumb, handsome, serious face. He comes closer and takes Shane's hand.

"You scared me." He scolds.

"I scared myself." Shane admits. "Everyone gets their bell rung eventually, though, right? You can't save me from everything." Shane pokes him. "Misterrrr Bodyguard." He laughs at his own joke.

Rozanov is not laughing.

Shane's breath catches when his hand reaches up and gently, so gently, caresses his cheek. He closes his eyes to savor the feeling.

His parents walk in right at that moment, and Shane pouts at the loss of Rozanov's touch.

His dad shakes Rozanov's hand, and his mom pulls him into a hug.

“Oh Ilya, it was so sweet of you to visit.”

“He was at the game mom.” Shane pipes up.

“Was good game. Before.” Rozanov says, and they all collectively wince.

Shane is so sleepy, and all of his favorite people are in one room. His blinks get slower, his eyelids heavy as they talk around him.

~

Recovery is a slow and frankly, annoying process. Shane is not used to having so much free time. No hockey, very limited screen time, and lingering pain make it a not so great few weeks.

Rozanov comes to visit him a few times, even going so far as to sit and do a puzzle with him. They don't really talk about anything serious, and Shane gets the feeling that the other man is trying to be extra gentle with him since he's injured. It's equal parts sweet and annoying.

Rozanov hits it off with his parents. He stays for dinner now, talks hockey with his mom, and cars with his dad. Shane isn't even sure he's still the favorite Hollander anymore.

It's nice though, that Rozanov gets along so well with his family. It feels important. It's like a puzzle piece that he didn't even know was missing has been located. Rozanov has had a rough go of it lately, he deserves to drink a beer with Shane's dad and be doted on by his mom. It's still strange to think how far their relationship has come from a few months ago, when they were just professional acquaintances.

Shane should probably talk to the other man about his feelings. Now is not a good time though, he should wait. Rozanov catches his eye across the room and winks. Shane's stomach

flutters nervously. Yeah, he should wait just a little longer.

Chapter End Notes

I'm especially proud of this chapter. I hope you are all enjoying!

Chapter 7: Chapter Six

Chapter Notes

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

A few months after his accident, Shane is scheduled for a quick appearance. His team never made it to the finals and obviously did not win the Cup this year. He's scheduled to appear at a press conference to give a speech about how they're going to come back strong next year. He and Rozanov have stopped at a gas station, for gas of course, and then Rozanov wanted to check out the snack selection, so Shane joined him inside. He's checking the label on a bag of protein chips when Rozanov grabs him by the elbow, *hard*.

"Ow-"

"Shh." Rozanov immediately shushes him. It's then that Shane becomes aware of a commotion.

"Put the money in the bag!" A man is shouting. Holy shit, is this place being robbed? Shane freezes, but Rozanov drags him by the elbow behind the display case.

"Do not speak." He hisses. They stand there, listening to the cashier cry as the man continues to yell. There's shuffling noises, which Shane assumes is the cash being stuffed into a bag. It's like a scene straight out of a movie. Shane's blood feels ice cold and his heart is pounding in his chest. The sudden adrenaline surge is intense. He feels like Rozanov's hand on his arm is the only thing anchoring him to this earth.

"Hey! You! Boots." Rozanov and Shane both freeze as they realize at the same moment that part of Rozanov's boot is visible around the side of the display. Rozanov doesn't even look at him, so as not to alert the robber that he's also there, and he steps out with his hands up.

Oh god. Oh god. Oh god.

"Give me everything you've got." The man instructs. He's got a *gun* pointed right at Rozanov. Rozanov doesn't even flinch, he just takes off his watch, and takes his wallet out of

his pocket and throws them at the man.

“The necklace too.”

Rozanov freezes, and Shane feels like he’s going to combust. Rozanov’s cross, the one that was his mother’s.

His hands shake, but Shane takes a deep breath and steps out too. “Anything but the necklace. You can have everything I’ve got. I won’t cancel my credit cards. I have a lot.” Shane starts stripping off the Rolex he got from the ad campaign.

The robber looks surprised to see Shane come out of nowhere. Ironically, Shane might be more scared of Rozanov at this moment, the way he’s glaring daggers at him. Sirens sound in the distance, and the man looks between them as if weighing a choice, before he scoops up their belongings that they threw toward him and makes a break for it.

Rozanov turns to him and grips him by the shirt, backing him up against the shelves and leaning furiously into his face. “Do not *ever* do that again.”

“He was going to take-”

“Don’t care. He had a *gun*, Hollander! He could’ve shot you!”

“Oh, so it’s okay if he hurts *you*?” Shane fires back.

“Yes!” Rozanov cries out. “I am supposed to protect you! Is my job!” He hisses.

“Right.” Shane says bitterly. “It’s just your job. You get paid to do it.” How silly he is to forget that, after everything, Rozanov gets paid to be there for him. That’s all, there’s nothing more to it.

Rozanov releases him, because the police have arrived. It's a long, arduous process of giving statements and checking on the cashier and filing reports of their stolen items. When they're finally allowed to leave, with the promise of the police being in touch for further information, Shane is utterly drained.

The adrenaline high has worn off and left him trembling and incredibly tired. The argument with Rozanov has left him unsettled and upset. He walks over to a nearby bush and vomits, wiping his mouth after with shaky hands.

"Hollander?"

Shane shakes his head, horrified to find that now his eyes are wet too. "I'm fine. Just...just leave me alone."

Rozanov, never one to listen, pulls him into his chest instead. Shane goes willingly, allowing himself to close his eyes and press his forehead into Rozanov's body. "Shhh, is okay now."

"I was so scared." Shane admits. "You were so brave. And don't give me that bullshit that it's your job." He adds after a moment. "Your job is to make sure rabid fans don't maul me in the street, not to face down armed gunmen for me."

"I am sorry this happened to you again." Rozanov says into his hair. Shane laughs bitterly. It wasn't even really Shane this time, at least, at first, but yeah, he supposes this is the second time he's been robbed this year.

"I was scared for *you*." Shane admits.

"Let's go home." They are under a mutual understanding that neither one of them wants to be alone right now. They go back to Shane's apartment, and Rozanov calls his employer to let them know what happened, and Shane calls his parents.

They're understandably very upset, but he assures them that he's fine and that they don't need to come over. In exchange for that, Yuna insists on talking to Rozanov. Shane gives him the phone and leaves the room to give them some privacy.

He makes dinner for them and they put something mindless on the tv. They don't really *do* this, but it's not as uncomfortable as it should be. Shane guesses the slow evolution of their friendship has culminated to this.

"I lie earlier." Rozanov says when they've both been staring at the tv so long that their tired eyes are burning.

"What do you mean?"

"I do not only protect you because it's my job."

Shane's heart starts thumping and he looks at Rozanov. The other man stares back, unwavering.

"I care about you, Hollander." Rozanov admits.

And Shane is so scared. This moment means everything is about to change, but really, he's even more scared of letting this go. He feels things for Ilya Rozanov that he's never felt for anyone. He thinks back to all of his best days over the last few months. Ilya was there for all of them. Actually, some of the worst, as well. He's been a constant, a staple. Someone that Shane could rely on.

Things could have gone horribly wrong earlier today, and Shane would have never gotten the chance to let Ilya know how he felt about him. The thought curdles in his stomach.

He leans forward and presses their lips together. It's soft and sweet, almost chaste. A promise. Ilya responds in kind, their kiss becoming deeper but not hurried.

When they both pull away for air, Ilya says “I do not think I should be your bodyguard anymore.”

Shane laughs a little. “Yeah, you’re probably right.” There’s a lot they still have to figure out, but they’ve just taken the first step. The future is unknown, but suddenly Shane isn’t scared anymore.

By the following week, things have changed, and now, Shane Hollander officially does *not* have a bodyguard.

Shane Hollander has a boyfriend.

Chapter End Notes

Shane Hollander, I am so sorry that I wrote you getting robbed not once, but TWICE in one fic. I still love you bb.

That's a wrap! I had a lot of fun writing this story and I hope you all enjoyed. I'll see you at the cottage!

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