heated roommates

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heated roommates

by biibuckley

Summary

"Fuck you Rozanov."

He smirks. Even in the dark, Shane can feel it. The way his mouth quirks up and his eyes widen. "If you ask nicely."

or

shane hollander and ilya rozanov are roommates in college who hate each other. until they don't.

ft. reddit, letterboxd, RA scott hunter, tuna melts and late nights.

Notes

baby's first *heated rivalry* fic. i hope you all enjoy <3

trigger warnings: anxiety, depression, mention of suicide (canon irina death), mentions of disordered eating/unhealthy eating habits (it's not overly focused on i just figured i'd make a note of it), underage drinking, internalized homophobia (shane)

a special shoutout to my cat for both watching the show with me and helping me write this. she truly is gods strongest solider

thank you to ainsley for the title !!

See the end of the work for more notes

AUGUST

Shane Hollander didn't like random roommates.

On paper, it was a fine concept.

Throw two people in a room together who don't know each other very well (or at all) and simply pray they don't kill each other.

His freshman year, it worked out fine.

He met Hayden Pike, who was a year older than him. The two of them got along great and the year was a lot better than Shane thought it was going to. The plan was he was going to live with Hayden again, for the rest of his college career.

That worked for two years, but fell through when Hayden got his long term girlfriend, Jackie, pregnant. He didn't drop out, but he decided to move in with her off-campus and do online classes to "provide for the family".

Shane couldn't blame him.

Not really.

The problem came in when he had already picked a room for his junior year.

And it was too late to change it.

So, he was stuck in Williams Hall, room 212 with an empty bed. He had gotten an e-mail two weeks before his move in day, saying the bed was assigned to someone named I. Rozanov.

He could have looked into him, and realistically, he should have.

But, he only got a few weeks to relax with his parents and decided to focus on *anything else*. Sure, his anxiety was eating him alive about it, but that was a problem he could deal with later.

Worse comes to worse, he just had to exist with the guy. There was no rule written anywhere that said he had to be best friends with him. It was a miracle he was close to Hayden, and he knew that it would be almost impossible to catch lightning in a bottle twice.

So, on move in day, Shane packed his car and drove the commute.

His family lived in Canada, and he was going to school in the states, so he technically classified as an out of state student, meaning that he simply had to make the trek a little earlier than most students attending the same program as him.

The drive was fine enough, and he got to the room at 11:30, all of his bags packed in a shopping cart.

Slowly, he clicked open the door, his eyes falling to the empty side of the room. Soon after, they wandered to the *other side* where he saw a man lying on his stomach, scrolling on his phone.

His hair was light, his eyes were bright, and he was wearing a black tank-top and shorts that were *far* too revealing according to Shane's standards. His feet were bare, and he was kicking them in the air.

"You must I. Rozanov?" Shane questions. "I'm Shane. Hollander. I'm your roommate."

He glances up and rolls his eyes. "Yes. Hello."

And that was that. He went back to scrolling on his phone, eyes focused, feet still kicking.

"So, what does the I stand for?"

"The what?"

"The I." Shane repeats, setting a bag on his bed. "Your name? I. Rozanov?"

He shakes his head. "Nothing." he answers. "I am Rozanov."

"Weird thing for your parents to do."

"Yes." Shane frowns. "What Hollander?"

"You can just call me Shane."

Rozanov groans. "*What Hollander*?" he repeats, emphasizing each syllable.

Shane promptly ignores the chill that goes up his spine hearing the Russian accent as Rozanov says it.

"Is this how this year is going to go?" Shane asks.

Rozanov looks at him. "Are you going to be this annoying this year? You tell me, Hollander."

"I'm not being annoying."

Rozanov presses his lips together in a thin line, eyebrows raised. "You kind of are."

"How am *I* being annoying?"

"You waltz in here… acting like you own the place." Rozanov answers. "Is kind of asshole move."

Shane rolls his eyes. "Oh you have to be kidding."

"Russians do not kid." Rozanov offers.

"And Canadians aren't annoying."

“I beg to differ.” Rozanov tells him. “Are you going to gawk at me all day or are you going to finish?”

“I’m going to finish.” Shane insists. “And then I’m going to talk to Scott to see about a room change.”

Scott Hunter had been the one e-mailing the inhabitants of second-floor Williams Hall for a week, the perfect over-eager RA.

He was a senior, an English major and insisted in his introduction that despite his appearance, he really wasn’t as scary as he seemed.

He also promised that he wasn’t just doing it for the free room benefits, but Shane had his doubts.

“What good is a room change going to do *after* you finish?”

Shane stares at him. “For *you*, Rozanov.”

He places a hand over his heart. “You wound me, Hollander!” he says. “I doubt Hunter will help. I saw him earlier.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Shane huffs. “You didn’t…”

“I didn’t give him a quickie or anything.” Rozanov interjects. “His boyfriend was right there, it would have been rude. Besides, I do not kiss and tell.”

“Great.” Shane says, setting a bag down. After a moment of silence, he turns to Rozanov and his stupid smug grin. “You know, actually, I’m just going to go talk to Scott now. Maybe I can get a different room.”

“I wish you luck, Hollander.” Rozanov calls. “You would be doing me a favor as well.”

—

Shane made his way to Scott’s door, steps quick.

(There was the brief moment when he left that he paused to look at their door for the first time.

Written in perfect script were their names on hockey-sticks.

Shane Hollander written on one, the ‘h’ fit with a swirl at the end *I Rozanov* written on the other. There was little extra care put into his name, but they did put a line through the Z. Shane assumed only older people did that.

Other than that, though, it was clear that he wasn’t learning Rozanov’s name anytime soon. And it was becoming more and more clear he might just be living with a body-snatcher who decided to inhabit a tall ~~attractive~~ Russian.

It was also worth noting that other people's full names were written by their doors.

Across the hall alone was *Rose Landry*, *Luca Haas* and *Kyle Swift*. It was only Rozanov that was being elusive from everyone around him.)

The sooner he got everything sorted, the sooner he would be rid of Rozanov.

He got to Scott's door and banged on it until his hand was sore.

It clicked open and someone who seemed to be around Shane's age answered, smiling. "Hi." he says, fit with a New York drawl to his words. "Are you here for Scott?"

"Yes, I am." Shane replies. "I'm Shane."

He nods. "Ah." he turns his body to the side, inviting him in. "He should be back soon, he's chatting with maintenance right now."

Shane walks in and turns to face the mystery man. He had brown hair, deep brown eyes and a kind smile. It was also not lost on Shane that he was wearing pajama shorts and a oversized t-shirt.

"Alright." he answers. "Should I wait here or…? I don't mean to intrude…"

He smiles. "Oh, no, you can wait here. I don't mind." he insists. "Scott told me you might be by."

"What?"

"Just… get comfortable." he says, smiling. "I'm Kip, by the way. Kip Grady. I'm an Art major."

"Are you waiting for Scott too?"

Kip frowns. "I'm his boyfriend." he offers, gesturing to himself.

"Oh." Shane says evenly. "That makes more sense."

Silence fills the dorm.

God.

Where was Scott?

Shane resisted the urge to look around his room, especially with the knowledge that Scott Hunter's *boyfriend* was standing in front of him. He didn't want to know what the two of them got up to behind closed doors, especially if he was going to communicate with Scott without dying of embarassment.

"So, how long have you two been together?" Shane asks, desperate to fill the space. He just hoped Kip would be okay with a total stranger asking about his love life.

Kip smiles softly. “Freshman year.”

“Is that so?”

“Yep.” he smiles. “I was lost on campus and ended up walking around one night and met Scott. He offered to walk me back to my dorm and I invited him to dinner as a thank you.”

Shane smiles. “And the rest is history?”

“More or less.” Kip tells him. “We’ve been going out since.”

“And you… live here?”

“Between you and me, an RA can get away with a lot.” he says. Shane could have inferred that from the extra large mini fridge he passed when walking in, but it was nice to have someone else acknowledge the privilege. “It helps that I’m here on scholarships and financial aid and living with my boyfriend gets rid of me paying for housing.”

“Are you talking about me *again*?”

Shane hadn’t even heard the door open, much less Scott Hunter come in.

Once Kip heard his boyfriend, though, it was hard to miss him. Scott was tall, and he looked like he would play a sport if he had the chance. He was wearing an orange sweatshirt and black shorts, a soft smile on his face at the sight of Kip.

“Every chance I get.” Kip answers, kissing him. “This is Shane Hollander.” he says, turning Scott to face him.

“Sorry to barge in.”

Scott smiles. “It’s all good. It’s nice to meet you officially.” he promises, extending a hand to him. “So, you’re the one living with Rozanov, right?”

“Y-yes? How did…?”

“I met him earlier.” he tells him. “Figured once his roommate got here, I’d be hearing from him.”

Shane frowns. “So, does that mean there’s no way to get a new roommate, then? Or to move out?”

Kip laughs.

“*Kip*.” Scott says, voice firm. There’s nothing harsh in it, rather, it’s laced with teasing and adoration. “Don’t.”

“Sorry sweetheart.” Kip says, unapologetically.

“Unfortunately, if you couldn’t tell from my wonderful boyfriend, there’s no way to change your room assignment.” Scott says, turning to face Shane.

“Great.”

“For what it’s worth, I’m sorry, Shane.”

“I’m not!” Kip pipes up.

Shane and Scott turn to face him. “Kip…”

“Sorry! I can smell a movie plot from a million miles away.” Kip says, hands up. “This is classic—”

“My life is not a movie.”

“*But* it’d be a boring movie if you moved out of the dorm.” Kip offers. “Running from Rozanov isn’t going to solve anything.”

Shane rolls his eyes, resisting the urge to kick the wall.

He knew better than to do that, though. The walls in dorm rooms were famously thin and he didn’t want to torment whoever had the privilege of living next to Scott Hunter and his boyfriend.

“Do you at least know his name?”

Scott shakes his head. “I don’t.”

“There’s no way it’s not written somewhere.”

“Even if it was, I wouldn’t be telling you.” Scott says, smirking. “You can work up to that.”

“Did you have to work up to his name?” Shane asks, pointing to Kip, as if there was any confusion.

Kip smiles. “Nope.”

“Once again… not helping.”

“I’m not here to help.” Kip says easily. “I’m here to love you and look pretty.”

Scott rolls his eyes and kisses his boyfriend fondly. “And you do both flawlessly.”

“*Okay*. And on that note, I’m gonna go!” Shane interjects. “Thanks for nothing!”

“Actually, Shane, before you go…” Scott says, scribbling something on a piece of paper. “Here’s my number, and Kip’s. My door is closed to complain about Rozanov, but you seem chill if you want to talk.”

“Thanks.” Shane smiles, stuffing the paper in his pocket. “How old are you that you give me your number on a piece of paper?”

“I’m not *that* old.”

“Whatever you say, Hunter.”

By the time he got back to the dorm, Rozanov was gone.

For a brief moment, Shane hoped that he had moved out in the time he was gone, but his side of the room was just as packed as it had been when he left.

His eyes fell to his desk, glazing over a small Russian flag that was on the wall.

It didn’t make much sense to Shane that Rozanov would be going to college in the states, especially if he was from Russia, but Shane himself was from Canada, so there was no use in casting stones.

On his desk was also a photograph that caught his eye.

Sure, above his desk were polaroids of Rozanov with who Shane assumed were his friends, but those were worn from age, falling apart at the corners and half-assed on the wall.

The one on his desk stood out because it wasn’t like that at all. It was in a gold frame, and the glass that was holding the picture was clean.

It depicted a young boy — around ten, if Shane had to guess — sitting on a woman’s lap. She was beautiful, her soft eyes smiling at the photographer. They were both flashing genine smiles and it was easy to see the resemblance.

It must have been an old photo of Rozanov and his mother, but Shane was thrown for a loop at how *happy* he looked.

There was a young twinkle in his eye, which was expected of a photo taken when he was so young, but there was more to it. He didn’t look like he was holding back. Like, right then, with his mother was the happiest he had ever been. Like even at his young age, he knew life couldn’t get better than right on his mother’s lap.

Soon, Shane felt bad.

He could have stood there all day over-analyzing everything on Rozanov’s side. But, if he was going to be difficult, Shane wasn’t trying to make things harder by furthering the existing rift between the two of them.

So, he turned back to his side, and focused his attention on unpacking, all while texting Kip. He didn’t have any *problems* with Scott, he just felt weird.

Befriending your RA felt like dating a coworker, so Shane wanted to avoid it if he could. But, befriending your RA’s long term boyfriend? Now *that* was free game.

(It was more like uncharted territory, but Shane was willing to overlook that for science.)

Shane:

Hi Kip! It's Shane :)

Kip (Scott's Boyfriend)

heyy shane !!

the lack of auto-caps being off is throwing me for a loop lmao

you and scott should start a club

Shane:

The lack of what being off?

Kip (Scott's Boyfriend)

ugh nothing

how's it going over there?

use nice language, scott is reading this over my shoulder

and asking why you haven't texted him yet

Shane:

It's going okay. Rozanov isn't here.

And hi, Scott. Glad you're here in spirit, I'll text you soon, promise.

Speaking of…

Kip (Scott's Boyfriend)

No, Shane. I don't have Rozanov's number. And even if I did, I wouldn't give it to you. If you want it, you'll have to get it yourself from the man in question.

sorry scott stole my phone

Shane:

Ugh what's the point of texting the RA if he can't pull strings for you?

Kip (Scott's Boyfriend)

oh he can, he’s just choosing to be difficult

Shane:

Slap him for me, would you?

Kip (Scott's Boyfriend)

consider it taken care of

Shane:

Scott if he did that on the ass just know that is not what I wanted nor what I meant in the slightest! Just in case!

Kip (Scott's Boyfriend)

I am not at liberty to discuss this with the people on my floor, Shane.

Shane:

Okay gross. Go flirt with your boyfriend away from me, please!

By the time Rozanov came back, Shane was done unpacking.

There wasn’t much to his decor, just a few family photos and one or two posters from a few movies he enjoyed. He had brought more, but he wasn’t exactly in the mood to deal with Rozanov’s opinions about every little thing that he did.

He already felt like he was being watched and he had been there for less than a day.

“Did you have a good time?” Shane asks, not looking up from his phone.

Rozanov gives no indication he even heard Shane so when he flops on his bed and starts taking off his shirt with a, “Yep.” in reply, Shane nearly jumps out of his skin.

“Oh.” he answers. “I’m glad. That’s good!”

Rozanov fidgets with his waistband and smiles.

Shane, stupidly, looks up just as he’s taking off his pants.

His legs are toned.

Yeah, he had been wearing shorts earlier, but Shane didn’t let himself look. Faced with Rozanov now, he swallowed, desperate to hide whatever was trying to bubble out of him.

“Yep.” he repeats.

There’s something within his tone that makes Shane crazy.

The way the words come off of his tongue, hanging in the air like he's trying to test Shane.

He wasn't in the mood to deal with it, if he was being honest.

But, Kip's words echoed in his head.

Running from Rozanov, no matter how tempting, wasn't going to solve anything.

If he wanted to have a semi-healthy roommate relationship with him, it was clear he'd have to make the first move.

On instinct, he tried reaching for an interest Rozanov might have. There were no personality indicators on his side, though. The only thing Shane knew was he was Russian, had some kind of interest in men, and that he valued who Shane assumed was his mother a lot.

Other than that, his mind was blank.

So. Instead, he sighs. "Did I do something wrong?"

"No." Rozanov answers instantly. "You are not interesting to have done something wrong."

"Fuck off, I'm plenty interesting."

Rozanov hums. "Hm… not really."

"What makes you think you know me that well?" Shane inquires, putting his phone down.

He shouldn't be testing Rozanov like this.

He knows that.

At the same time, there's something about him that makes Shane crazy.

He couldn't just ignore that, even if every bone in his body was shouting danger.

Rozanov glances at Shane's wall.

He knows what he finds before he opens his mouth again.

"You have a *Lord of the Rings* poster." Rozanov says. "*Return of the King*, right?"

Shane frowns. "Yes," he answers. "So, what? I have good taste and that makes me not interesting?"

"Interesting people do not have a *Lord of the Rings* poster on their wall in college." Rozanov tells him. "Interesting people have pictures of their friends. Girlfriend. Boyfriend. Hook-up. Something."

"So, what, you've had sex with everyone on your wall?" Shane questions. "Is that what you're saying?"

“I am saying you are not interesting.” Rozanov repeats. “If you want to believe my sex life is that good, you can.”

And that makes Shane’s blood boil.

He isn’t really sure why, either.

He just knows he didn’t want to get made fun of by his roommate for liking a movie.

He presses his lips into a thin line, grateful to have not put out his *When Harry Met Sally*… poster.

If Rozanov was ripping him to pieces over a cult classic, he didn’t want to know what he would think of that.

And everything about that movie meant too much to him for Rozanov to ruin it for a stupid rivalry.

“Fuck you Rozanov.”

He smirks. Even in the dark, Shane can feel it. The way his mouth quirks up and his eyes widen. “If you ask nicely.”

Shane groans and turns over, forcing his eyes closed before he could say something he’d really regret.

—

r/roommates

Posted by hollan3r • 2h ago

My roommate might want me to go crazy

It’s been less than a day and I fear this man wants me dead already.

I’m not the easiest guy to live with, I get that and I’m almost positive my former roommate and my parents can agree.

But my new roommate and I have had two conversations and whenever I catch him looking at me, it feels like he just found out I killed his cat and laughed as he grieved.

And it’s weird because he goes after anything and everything about me for seemingly no reason. I even went to the RA earlier and he told me that he figured he’d seen me because of who I’m living with, which isn’t a great sign.

I don’t know. Maybe I’m making a big deal out of nothing, but it doesn’t feel like that. Not to me, anyways.

Advice appreciated, but not needed. I just needed to complain before I rip my own hair out (or his if that gets better results, but it doesn't feel like it would).

1.2k comments

u/w3rprks 121 points • 1h ago

op this is giving enemies to lovers i expect an update in two weeks maximum

u/land3y 261 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/w3rprks*

two weeks?? i feel like they'll last a week

u/w3rprks 121 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/land3y*

i'll take that bet

u/hollan3r 521 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/w3rprks and u/land3y*

Considering I'm straight, I don't find this to be a good use of your time. But knock yourselves out.

u/land3y 261 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/w3rprks*

didn't realize that was a factor might have to not do that bet after that

—

Ilya had no strong feelings about Hollander.

Really. He didn't.

He knew how he came across to people, especially strangers. Nobody liked him right from the start.

That was just the way life went, even from when he was young. But, when he made the choice to live in a double instead of a single, he hoped that whoever his roommate was would be an okay enough guy.

He didn't, however, expect Shane Hollander to be the one to walk in the room.

Or his freckles.

Or his perfect hair.

Or his perfect face.

Or his stupid Canadian accent.

Ilya was comfortable enough with himself. He knew who he was.

An asshole to everyone around him, especially upon first meeting, but he wasn't just an asshole.

There was more. There had to be.

He wasn't just the Russian guy that sat in the back of classes, praying nobody noticed him.

Not anymore.

Not since moving out of Russia when he was seventeen.

He was loud, confident, comfortable and proud. Proud to be Russian. Proud to be bisexual.

And painfully embarrassed to almost immediately be down bad for Shane Hollander.

Every word he said felt like honey running down his spine, and he was happy to live with that forever. But he also knew he couldn't let himself live there.

Just from initially meeting him, he knew who Hollander was.

He knew he was timid. That much was clear from his body language, completely within himself.

He knew he was anxious. He kept tapping his foot and refused to make eye contact the entire time the two spoke.

He knew he was trying his best.

Trying his best to communicate with Ilya. And Ilya was letting it crumple right before him because he couldn't shake the feeling of lust coursing through his veins.

He could barely look at Hollander for more than a second without feeling his head spin with something he hadn't really felt since he was a young hormonal teenager.

So, when Hollander made a lame excuse to leave, Ilya made a sex joke, texted Troy and left the dorm before he even answered, desperate for air.

Ilya:

where are you

i need an escape even if youre being boring

He waited for what felt like a lifetime before his phone buzzed in his hand.

Troy:

You're lucky I love you, Rozanov. Come by my dorm, we can chat.

Harris just left, so don't worry about interrupting anything.

Ilya:

can we go for a walk?

Troy:

Get here first, and then yes.

Ilya:

you are a lifesaver thank you

Troy Barrett's dorm was connected to Williams hall, and Ilya had never been more grateful.

He met Harris first.

He was recording something for the school's social media Ilya's freshman year, and he got roped into being in the video.

When every comment was obsessing over Ilya's accent, Harris insisted that he became a regular guest.

Soon after, Ilya met Harris (at the time friend, soon turned boyfriend) Troy. He meshed well with him, and the two of them had been friends since.

He got to his dorm, banging on the door like his life depended on it.

Troy opened it after a minute and smiles. "Are you dying Ilya?"

"No." Ilya answers. "What makes you think that?"

"The urgency, for one." Troy says, stepping aside, letting Ilya into the room. "What's going on?"

"My roommate."

Troy nods, like that was enough to go off of. When Ilya doesn't say anything else, he makes a gesture with his hand. "Your roommate…" he urges. "You gotta give me more here, man."

"Is too pretty." Ilya says, defeated.

Troy barks out a laugh so loud, Ilya feels it bounce against the walls.

Ilya throws himself onto Troy's desk chair, bringing his knees up to his chin and frowning.

"That is not helpful."

"I'm sorry dude." Troy manages through wheezing laughs. "But… your problem with your roommate is that he's too pretty?"

"Yes." Ilya repeats, voice soft. "He has these freckles… and he's from Canada so he has this accent."

Troy stops mid laugh and turns to him, eyes deadly serious. "Did you say something asshole-y?"

Ilya groans. "What do you mean 'asshole-y'? I am not an English professional but—"

"Something that made you sound like an ass, smartass." Troy interjects, sitting on the floor. "Did you say something a person who doesn't know you might see as rude?"

Ilya frowns. "Most likely," he answers. "I could barely look at the guy let alone figure out what to say."

"Ilya…"

"It wasn't my proudest moment, I'll admit!"

Troy purses his lips. "Come on, we're going on that walk now before you say something that makes me think you're an asshole."

"I am an asshole." Ilya offers, standing up. "Is part of my charm, no?"

"A *real* asshole." Troy mends.

Ilya smiles and follows Troy out of his dorm.

The two of them fall into a rhythm rather quickly, chatting about anything and everything under the sun.

Well, almost.

There were a few times Ilya felt that Troy was thinking about Harris and quickly directed him away from that topic, still traumatized from when he had walked in on the two of them early in their relationship.

He saw enough of them that day, and had no plans to see that much of his friends again.

The walk was nice, and the two of them ended up getting dinner and spending the day together.

It wasn't until 8:30pm when the topic of Shane Hollander came up again.

Distantly, Ilya wondered what he was doing in their room, but he turned his head away from that quickly.

Whatever he was doing was his business and Ilya knew that better than anyone else.

“What did you say his name was?” Troy questions, scrolling on his phone.

This couldn’t be good.

“Shane.” Ilya replies. “Hollander. Why?”

Troy smiles. “I found his Instagram.” he says casually, scrolling up. “And his Letterboxd.”

“His what?”

“How old are you?”

“Twenty.”

“Ancient.”

“You’re…”

Troy smiles and turns his phone to Ilya.

He was looking at a simple interface, all things considered. His profile picture was a photo from a movie Ilya didn’t recognize and his “**FAVORITES**” were painfully predictable.

When Harry Met Sally, Wall-E, Lord of the Rings: Return of the King, The Searchers.

Ilya had seen three of them, and had only enjoyed one. The others were painfully fine, if you asked him.

“Why do I care about this?”

“This could be your *in*!” Troy insists.

Ilya rolls his eyes. “My what?”

“Your *in*. If you find a way to compliment one of these movies, he might ease up and you two could talk instead of chew each other out.”

“Right. Okay.”

“Don’t force it, though.”

“Right, right.”

(Later, when Ilya got back to the dorm, he really didn’t mean to comment on the movie he hated.

It was just the easiest one to comment on in the moment that didn't make him look like a stalker.

Under the covers, he texted Troy only to receive a "☹️👎🏻" in reply less than a minute later.

His *in* with Shane Hollander would simply have to be something else.)

Something shifted two weeks into the semester.

It started simple.

Ilya started not getting up for classes.

His earliest was at 10:45, so realistically, he should be able to get out of bed and get there with time to spare.

But the thought of getting out of bed became something that brought him physical discomfort to the point that he'd rather die than try.

He played it off whenever Hollander was around.

He either coughed, claiming a mysterious but non-contagious illness, or just had headphones on and didn't make eye contact.

The two of them still hadn't built a bridge, and it didn't feel like either of them were willing to budge first.

So, Ilya wasn't getting up for classes.

The next thing was less simple. Harder to explain. He stopped eating as much.

He meal-swipes sat at the same number for four days before he threw up the water he had been more or less living on.

Hollander noticed that.

He made a comment under his breath about how Ilya should be eating his vegetables and getting a good night's sleep instead of going out every night.

Truthfully, when Ilya "went out", it was either to clear his head in the stairwell or to see Troy.

But there was no convincing Hollander of that, so he didn't try.

Everything came to a head the last Friday in August.

Almost a month of living together, and Ilya could count on one hand the amount of non-hostile conversations he had with his roommate.

He was sitting on the bathroom floor, dry heaving when Hollander walked in.

He had a lecture on Fridays that ended at 1:45. By Ilya's calculations, he tended to get back around 2. Usually, he would make himself scarce.

That day, it felt like too much.

His mind was hurting and he didn't want to do anything he might regret, especially when he knew Hollander could find him.

So, naturally, he was in the bathroom.

The door was shut, the fan was on to cover his sobs and the lights were off to not hurt his eyes.

He wasn't sure what Hollander thought was going on, but he heard the knock.

"Rozanov." Hollander sounded pissed. Ilya was in their bathroom, so it made sense. "What are you doing?"

Ilya didn't say anything.

His lips were too dry, he couldn't form a sentence even if he wanted to.

"*Rozanov*." Hollander repeats. It was firmer, grounding Ilya to the reality he was living in. "Are you okay?"

Still nothing came out.

Only a choked up sob Ilya had been holding in since he heard the door to their room click shut.

It was then that Hollander must have realized the door wasn't locked, because he pushed it open, eyes widening at the sight of Ilya.

He didn't want to imagine how awful he looked.

His eyes were bloodshot, he was pale, shaking and in the middle of what felt like his hundredth breakdown that week alone.

"Jesus, Rozanov." Hollander says, dropping his phone on the hard bathroom tile. He drops to the floor and starts to reach for him when he stops dead in his tracks. "Are you…" he pauses, unsure. "God."

Ilya coughs, licks his lips.

Desperate to actually say something instead of just stare at him with wild eyes. "I…" he croaks. "Water."

English was failing him.

He felt his face heating up with embarrassment. He already felt bad enough that Hollander found him like this, much less that he could barely communicate with him.

Hollander nods, leaves the bathroom and comes back with an open water bottle. “Here.”

Ilya took it, chugged most of it and nods. “Thanks.”

“Are you okay?” Hollander repeats. “Stupid question. Sorry. What’s going on? What do you need?”

“I…” he pauses, thinking. “I do not know.”

Hollander nods, helping Ilya off of the bathroom floor. He must be as sweaty as he feels, because Hollander starts wiping his hand on his shorts once he gently places Ilya on a chair.

“Breathe.” Hollander instructs. “Have you eaten?”

“No.”

“Do you want to eat?”

“No.”

He purses his lips. “Would… would me eating help? Help you… feel okay with eating?”

Ilya looks at him. “Sure.” he says slowly. “If you are hungry, you can just eat.”

Hollander stands.

“Can you…”

He turns. “Yeah?”

“Can you grab my phone?” he requests. Hollander nods and comes back, handing it to him. “Thanks.”

They stay like that, for a while.

Hollander picking at a small salad and Ilya scrolling on his phone, trying to function again.

He looks at Hollander at one point, eyes wet.

“I…”

Hollander looks away from his salad at the sound of his roommate’s voice, eyes wide. “What?”

“I have depression.” he states quietly.

He had only told one person before.

But that one person was out with his boyfriend, and Ilya knew better than to interrupt that.

Why he was telling Hollander of all people, Ilya wasn't exactly sure.

Maybe it was because he was delirious.

Maybe it was because he wanted to mend whatever weirdness was stopping them from being friends.

Maybe he just wanted to feel less alone.

Or maybe, just maybe, he trusted him.

Whatever the reason, the confession sat in the air, with Hollander just *staring*, like that would solve everything.

"Okay."

"Sometimes… I forget." Ilya carries on. "I forget to do things. Eat. Sleep. Get up."

Hollander nods. "Is this…"

"Yes."

His eyes widen with what Ilya could only see as recognition. "Earlier this week when I…"

"Yeah."

"Why didn't you say something?" Hollander asks. "You've never held back before when it comes to putting me in my place."

Ilya shrugs weakly. "I did not feel up to it."

His eyes meet the photo of his mother on his desk.

"*She was happy. And then she wasn't.*" he wants to say.

He wants to tell Hollander that he didn't want him to see him as weak, like so many people in Russia saw his mom after she died.

He wants to tell him he didn't want Hollander to feel responsible for him.

"God, Rozanov." Hollander says slowly. "I'm so sorry. I would never have…"

Ilya nods. "I know."

"Please… keep me in the loop next time?" Hollander requests. "I'm not asking us to be friends or anything, but just, tell me when something is going on."

He can't promise him that. He can't promise him he'll remember to let Hollander in. He can't promise that he'll want to.

But, against his better judgement, he nods.

—

🔎 **therapist near me**

🔎 **side effects of depression medication**

🔎 **mental health tracking apps**

🔎 **depression and suicide correlation studies**

🔎 **irina rozanova obituary**

Ilya Rozanov,

Welcome to our services! The first available date for you to meet with a professional in our program and in your area is 17 September.

If anything happens before then that you need to talk about, please do not hesitate to contact us.

SEPTEMBER

September brought Shane Hollander back to Reddit.

He had downloaded the app when he got his phone a few years before, and since posting about his issues with Rozanov, he more or less ignored the app like the plague.

Every time he opened it, he just saw notifications about that post.

People chiming in with their viewpoint on Shane's relationship with his roommate, and far too many of them commenting on how he and said roommate had "tension".

The thought made Shane want to hurl.

Not because he was homophobic or anything. Simply because it was with him.

Since everything happened at the end of August, he had been encouraging Rozanov to talk to him.

That plan didn't always work, but Shane was taking steps to make sure that he felt safe in their room.

He bought him a new water bottle and left it on his desk with a sticky note for him to find. It was large enough that Rozanov would be okay filling it and taking it around in order to stay hydrated.

Rozanov thanked him with his own sticky note.

And that quickly became how the two communicated.

Shane would wake up to an empty dorm and find a note plastered on the bathroom door.

Sometimes Rozanov was out with his friends.

Occasionally, he was at the library or even the gym early on the weekend.

Every once in a while, he was in bed and the note was on Shane's desk, politely asking Shane to fill his water and saying it was going to be a hard day.

An okay day eventually, but a hard day.

And Shane knew to give him space on those days.

The reason Shane went on Reddit was because he needed to discuss Rozanov.

It was nothing bad. It was just a simple question.

Was he catching feelings for Rozanov or was he simply being a good roommate.

Because truthfully, Shane was unsure.

It felt friendly enough.

It felt like something he might do for Hayden or one of his friends back home.

There were instances when Rozanov would end his notes with 'xx' and Shane knew he wasn't imagining the fluttering that would buzz around in his chest, banging against his ribcage.

So, yeah.

Shane was back on Reddit.

Rozanov was out, the sticky note he had left that morning saying he was going to be out with Troy and then go to therapy afterwards.

He had been going semi-regularly since the 17th, and while Shane never asked for details, the way Rozanov came back was proof enough that whatever they were discussing was helping.

And that was all that he cared about.

r/advice

posted by hollan3r • 6hr ago

Am I (20M) falling for my roommate (also 20M) or am I just being a good roommate?

Okay, so if you saw me post something about my roommate about a month ago on r/roommates, this is indeed about the same guy.

And some of you in the replies might have genuinely called this one, so pat yourself on the back right now and then lock *in* because I need advice about this.

Last month, I came back from a class around 1:50.

He had been acting stranger than usual that week, but I figured it wasn't my place to comment. God knows if I was going through something and someone I barely knew called me out I'd squirm out of my skin.

But, this day when I got back, I found him on the bathroom floor and he kind of… opened up to me? He told me something about himself that I'm guessing he hasn't told a lot of people before.

Since then, I've been trying to be nicer to him.

It started small enough. Not noticeable if you weren't really looking.

I noticed pretty quickly that he's bad at remembering to drink water, especially when he's out and about for classes. And when he does, he just chugs a plastic water bottle and calls it a day.

So, I took it upon myself to buy him one.

It arrived at our dorm and I left it on his desk with a simple note "You drink out of this".

Since then, we've communicated through sticky notes. He tells me when he's going to have a hard day, and we've started to celebrate mini victories through them.

We still don't talk, not really.

We've gotten dinner on campus together once or twice and a friend of mine asked if we had "gotten over ourselves" to which I had no reply.

Because I honestly don't know.

Now, here's the problem.

Recently, he's been flirting — maybe — with me and I don't know if I'm falling for him or if I'm just happy that he's comfortable enough with someone else to openly flirt with them.

I could always talk to the aforementioned friend of mine, but he, like a lot of people on here, think we're destined to waltz into the sunset together so I'm not super keen on that.

I don’t know.

I’m not sure if this is the kind of thing you guys can help me with, I just know that I need help and didn’t know where else to go.

4.6k comments

u/brtt 172 points • 1hr ago

yeah it sounds like youre in love op

u/w3rprks 182 points • 1hr ago

i foresaw this !!!!! 🤭🤭

u/land3y 269 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/w3rprks*

this is iconic of us

u/hrrs 418 points • 1hr ago

If this is a sexuality crisis and a falling for your roommate situation, I need to go get popcorn.

u/jzzywihit 193 points • 1hr

get this gay shit off of my reddit what the fuck

u/wulfbrd 12 points • 1hr ago

is your roommate straight? because if he’s not, he’s definitely flirting with you

u/hollan3r 516 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/wulfbrd*

I’m ninety percent sure he’s bisexual.

u/wulfbrd 12 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/hollan3r*

figure that out first

u/hollan3r 516 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/wulfbrd*

And how do you recommend I do that?

u/wulfbrd 12 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/hollan3r*

talk to him ??? he's ur roommate ??

Once mindlessly scrolling through the replies on his own post as well as other posts with similar energy, he left the dorm.

It was a Saturday afternoon, and he hoped that someone was home if he knocked on Scott Hunter's door.

Luckily, there was. Scott answered the door almost immediately, smiling at the sight of him.

"Hey Shane!"

Shane nods. "Hi, Scott." He scoots past him and walks into his dorm, grateful that he didn't interrupt Scott and Kip. "Where's Kip?"

"At work."

"I thought he was on financial aid and not paying for room and board."

Scott closes the door. "Oh, he is. But he doesn't exactly want to be broke, either. He works at the coffee shop in the library on the weekends." he pauses, examining Shane. "So, what's going on? You look like you saw a ghost."

He shakes his head, pacing around the dorm.

It was too small to comfortably pace in, and it only took him five strides to cross it, but he couldn't imagine himself standing still either.

He stops and looks at Scott.

He looks so free, so comfortable. He's wearing a t-shirt that is a little too tight and shorts.

He looks happy, even with his face scrunched up to form a concerned expression.

The guy was young, out, and living with his boyfriend, of course he was happy.

There was no reason he shouldn't be.

"You're gay, right?" Shane blurts.

Scott laughs, leaning against the wall. “What gave it away?” he asks. “I thought I was being so secretive.”

“Yeah, if you want to be secretive maybe don’t gush about your boyfriend when you first meet someone.”

“Shane, it was a joke.” Scott deadpans, running a hand over his face. “I’m very gay, yes.”

He stops, examining Scott.

He said it with so much certainty that Shane felt weak in the knees. The thought of being that open, loud and proud made him feel sick.

“How… how did you know?”

“That I was gay?” Shane nods. He couldn’t speak if he wanted to, his mouth had gone terrifying dry once the question escaped his lips. “I guess I always knew.” Scott answers evenly. “I never really fit in when I was younger. Didn’t play sports, didn’t have a lot of friends who were girls. I kept to myself. People called me sensitive. Threw around slurs I didn’t know or understand at the time. Once I got to high school, I realized that I might be the thing that people had been holding over my head for so many years. It terrified me. The person you see before you didn’t happen until college. The cool, confident, out person, I mean. When I met Kip, I wanted to be better. So I started letting myself feel proud of myself instead of hide it away out of shame or fear that I was *wrong*. Being gay has never been a choice per se, but I made the choice to be proud of my identity and I wouldn’t change that for the world.”

Shane stares at him like every word that came out of his mouth was in a language he didn’t understand.

And maybe he didn’t.

Growing up, he never really interacted with the queer community.

Not really, anyways.

There were rumors about a few people in high school, but Shane focused on his classes and promptly ignored any discussion of other students’ sexualities.

As a result, he himself didn’t explore much.

He just stuck himself into what he knew and stayed there.

He had the image of someday, in college or afterward, figuring himself out. Trying to understand the puzzle and what piece went where.

With everything with Rozanov, though, those pieces were falling faster than he was ready for them to.

“Are you okay?” Scott questions lowly.

“I… I think…”

Scott stares at him, eyes wide. “Shane…” he says slowly, not moving an inch. “Are you saying…”

Shane looks at him, eyes welling with tears. “I think so.”

Shane closes his eyes, desperately trying to not cry when he feels arms wrap around him in a hug.

Slowly, without thinking, he wraps his arms around Scott, leaning into the hold ever so slightly.

He squeezes his eyes shut harder, but it’s no use.

Before he can stop them, tears start flowing and he just stands there, holding Scott like the world might end if he lets go.

“It’s okay, Shane.” Scott says slowly, not letting go. “Being gay, I mean. It’s okay.”

Shane nods. “I know.” His voice is small, cracked.

Scott disconnects him from the hug and frowns. “I promise you that it’s okay. You aren’t alone in this. You’re the furthest thing from alone.” he insists. “I’m here for you. And if you tell Kip, he’ll be here for you too. Or anyone else, for that matter.”

“Tell Kip what?”

Scott turns to the door and smiles softly at the sight of his boyfriend.

~~Shane wants that with Rozanov.~~

He directs his attention back to Shane, who’s fully crying, tears streaming down his cheeks and already staining his shirt.

Kip smiles at Scott, eyes widening at the sight of Shane Hollander crying in his room.

“Shane? What’s going on? What happened?”

Shane looks at him weakly. “Oh nothing.” he says quietly, sniffling. “Um.” he pauses and looks at Scott for some form of reassurance. He nods slowly and smiles. “Let’s just say there are three gay people in this room.”

It takes a minute for his words to register with Kip, but once they do, he lunges forward and wraps Shane in another hug.

“*Shane*!” Kip exclaims. “Oh my *God*!”

Shane smiles, patting Kip on the back. “I see why you like him.” he says, vaguely gesturing to Scott.

Kip disconnects from the hug and smiles. “I can’t believe this.” he tells Shane. “When… how long…” he pauses with a knowing smile.

Shit.

“Is it Rozanov?”

Shane frowns. “It’s not *not* Rozanov.”

Kip jumps. “I knew it! Have you told him? Is this a secret relationship situation?”

“I haven’t… Scott? A little help?”

“Sweetheart, why don’t we give Shane a second.” Scott says slowly. “Take your time, Shane.”

And that’s just what Shane does.

Eventually, he breaks and tells them that he may or may not be falling for Rozanov.

Tells them he doesn’t know what that means for him, especially since he doesn’t know how Rozanov identifies.

(They both try and fail to suppress a laugh at that, as if straight Rozanov was the best joke Shane ever told.)

Half-way through explaining everything, his phone buzzes from beneath his thigh with an unknown number.

Unknown:

hey it’s rozanov

thanks for your number earlier

and thanks in general

He smiles.

He had completely forgotten he gave Rozanov his number. He had written it on one of the sticky notes, it was an after thought, really.

Shane just wanted him to have it in case anything happened and he needed to contact him, but he didn’t think his roommate would ever actually take him up on that offer.

Shane:

Of course. I’m in your corner, Rozanov.

Rozanov:

ilya

Shane:

What?

Rozanov:

is my name

you asked what the i stood for

is ilya

Shane:

It's really pretty.

I'm still calling you Rozanov, though.

It feels too weird to call you anything else at this point.

Rozanov:

thank you hollander

and yes please

just Rozanov

unless you are dying

Shane:

And what if you're dying?

Rozanov:

i am dying after you

my life will be longer

Shane rolls his eyes and smiles.

Roz— *Ilya* and he weren't going to be friends, not really. But as long as they could be cordial, the two of them could hypothetically co-exist.

Hypothetically.

—

hollan3r logged *The Searchers*

★★★★½ • rewatched 26 September

Even if some people don't see the perfection of this, it will always be one of my favorites.

with roommate, comfort film, men <3

ily23 logged *The Searchers*

★★★ • watched 26 September

i mean sure if that's what floats your boat

with roommate, recommended, first time

hollan3r logged *Alien*

★★★★ • watched 26 September

I personally would've had a sensory overload just being on that ship

Shoutout to the fact that she saved the cat though, that was very real

with roommate, first time, stressed

ily23 logged *Alien*

★★★★★ • rewatched 26 September

my number 1 film for a reason !! it is perfection of film making if you ask me

with roommate, comfort <3, stressed !!

—

Ilya was doing better.

He wasn't fully *okay* per se, but he was doing better. He had gotten into a routine rather quickly all things considered. Part of that routine and the process of getting better was to get over Shane Hollander.

Living with him was getting easier, but there were still moments when he felt like his feelings were getting in the way of their relationship.

The pair started doing movie nights, and there were so many evenings when Ilya wanted nothing more than to rest his head on his shoulder.

Or make some kind of comment about how the romantic couple in the film reminded him of the two of them.

But he couldn't make that comment without Hollander noticing.

So, often, he just withheld that and stopped recommending they watch romcom's together. The two of them were doing okay, and everything was working out.

Except for the getting over him part.

Ilya never did anything half-way. That was one of the things that made strangers think he was an asshole.

If he felt something, he *felt* that something. There was no beating around the bush when it came to the inner workings of Ilya Rozanov.

If he wanted something, he worked hard to get that something. And currently, the thing he wanted was Shane Hollander.

And not even just the sex.

(Though he did imagine what that would be like on a few occasions).

He wanted to do the coupley things too.

He wanted to kiss him soundly, make him feel like he was the only one in the world.

He wanted to take him on a date. Even if it was just to study, he wanted to kick his feet under the table, and smirk when he looked at him with an accusatory look.

It was a stupid dream, all things considered, but it was a dream Ilya held close to his chest.

There was also the fact that he was starting to become suspicious that Hollander himself was as straight as he seemed when the two first met.

That came to a head when, during one of their movie nights, as per Ilya's request, the two of them were watching *The Terminator*.

Hollander never said anything incriminating, but that night, once the two had gotten ready for bed and Ilya was logging the film on Letterboxd, his eyes caught Hollander's review.

It was fresh, maybe a few minutes old.

"hollan3r logged *The Terminator*

★★★★ • watched 28 September

People go for The Terminator or Sarah. I'm here for Reese myself."

It was simple enough.

Reese was attractive, that was a fact. Ilya himself held back making a few comments while the two of them were watching the movie.

But it was the way he phrased in that made Ilya stop dead in his tracks. He didn't say Reese was a good character, or that he was upset that Reese died. He specifically said that people came for The Terminator or Sarah, and he went for Reese.

As in. He didn't go for the woman. Or the bug burly man. He went for *Reese*. The male love interest.

The *male* love interest.

Ilya bit his tongue, liked his review, and looked over at Hollander's bed.

He was lit by his phone screen, and his eyes glance up to read a new notification that lightly buzzed his device. Ilya didn't have to guess what that notification was.

When he did, he smiles softly and dismisses it.

Even if the dark, Ilya could feel the anxiety. The fear that he had revealed too much.

And Ilya, ever the optimist, took the dive.

If he did or said something wrong, then he would happily pay for the consequences.

He just had to know what Hollander meant.

"So, Reese, huh?" he questions in the dark.

Hollander audibly exhales. "Yep." he pauses. "How about you? Reese? Sarah?"

Ilya knew what he was asking. Of course he did.

It was the same question he had asked him moments before.

"They are both nice." Ilya decides evenly.

"Good taste." Hollander replies, blinking.

Ilya lets the words hang there before exhaling. "Was that… was that the first time you said it?"

He didn't really *say it*, his brain supplies. He kicks himself and hopes he didn't overstep.

"Third." he admits, voice small.

“Cool.” Ilya answers. He could leave it at that. Let the conversation fizzle out, but he gets a text, and an idea pops in his head. So, he pushes, “Have I introduced you to Troy and his boyfriend Harris?”

He turns his head to face Ilya’s bed. “No.”

“Would you want to meet them?” Ilya asks.

“Sure.”

“You do not have to say yes, Shane.”

Shane.

The name felt foreign on his tongue, but he was desperate to say it more.

He was so desperate, he barely even registered his response, which rocked him.

“I want to, Ilya.” he says, voice soft and muffled by his blanket, or maybe his hands. Ilya wasn’t looking at him anymore. “Maybe not now. But, at some point.”

And that was that.

Shane Hollander had some kind of an interest in men, and Ilya had a little bit of a chance. It was slim, sure, but slim wasn’t zero and he was running with that until he couldn’t run anymore.

“He *what*?” Troy questions, taking his headphones out of his backpack.

The two of them made it a point to get together for a study session at least once a month, and, as per routine, before getting stuff done, they would debrief each other.

Troy’s was fine. He told Ilya about his trip home to his parents the previous weekend and how he saw a few of his classmates who were surprised to see that he was out and proud.

Ilya was sitting on his hands the entire time, fighting back a grin.

He was waiting for the right moment to say something, and when Troy asked him how he had been, he bit.

He nodded, told him about a classmate he didn’t like and then simply said “My roommate came out to me”, waiting for Troy to react.

It was subtle at first.

He froze. His eyebrows piqued. And then he looked at Ilya, who was smiling full-tooth now.

“I say once more. He *what*?”

He smiles. “He came out to me.”

“Your roommate as in, Shane Hollander who you’re lowkey in love with Shane Hollander?”

“Low key.” Ilya repeats. “That feels… generous?”

Troy raises an eyebrow and pulls out his phone. “You are ridiculous, Rozanov.” he says, frantically typing something.

“What are you doing?”

Texting Harris.

“Texting Harris.”

“Can I not tell you one piece of news that you don’t immediately report to him?” Before Troy can reply, Ilya’s phone buzzes from underneath his thigh. “You did *not* put this in the group chat.”

“I might have.”

Troy:

Rozanov’s roommate came out to him.

I just felt the need to inform the troops.

Ilya:

this is really not needed

Harris:

He WHAT?

Luca:

i thought he already did that?

Kyle:

Yeah no, I would have remembered. Kip would have mentioned something if Shane had done that before semi-recently.

Ilya:

who is kip?

Kyle:

Scott Hunter’s boyfriend? He lives on our floor? With said boyfriend?

Ilya:

shane is friends with scott hunter?

Kyle removed Ilya Rozanov

“You cannot remove me from a chat where you are *talking about me*.” Ilya says, turning his attention back to Troy, who is giggling manically at his phone, effectively ignoring him.

“Someone removed you from a group chat? I can’t imagine why.” a voice says, breaking through the silence. For a second, Ilya assumes it was Troy, but he looked up, seemingly just as confused.

After a moment, Ilya’s eyes found Shane walking toward them, smiling. He was wearing a dark blue hockey crew-neck, black shorts and a *perfect* smile.

(Not that Ilya would say that, of course.

He was far too strong and dedicated with the prospect of getting over Shane that he barely noticed the way his smile curved as he calmed down.)

“They were being mean.” Ilya insists, crossing his arms.

Shane rolls his eyes. “Yeah, I’m sure they were.”

“They were.” he repeats. “Honest.”

“Whatever you say, Rozanov.” he turns to face Troy, his smile flickering for a second.

Ilya watches as something he’s seen only a handful of times happens right before his eyes.

Shane switches.

His mouth goes flat and his eyes go distant, like he’s trying his best to fit the mold that Troy might want.

Ilya had only seen it when he and Shane went to a floor meeting and he mustered up the courage to comment about how their neighbor was loud around one in the morning.

The way his jaw clenched, his fits were at his side and his eyes were wide, Ilya had never seen before.

And hadn’t seen since. Until right now.

With Troy, which didn’t make sense. Troy was a good guy. Ilya liked him.

Sure, he had a less than amazing past when he was in high school, fitting into the macho-man persona, but Shane didn’t know that.

And those days were far behind Troy now.

“And you must be Troy Barett.”

Ilya wasn’t sure how Shane knew his last name.

“You’re in the Psychology department, right?”

Or how he knew his major, which was information Ilya himself barely remembered. Troy told him once, and he tried to retain it, but it didn’t really come up.

He glances at Ilya before replying. “Uhm, yes? I’m sorry, I don’t have that information on you.”

“I did my research.”

“Right, of course.” Troy answers. “That’s not… slightly unnerving or anything.”

Shane smiles. “Good,” he says. “Maybe if you don’t want people to know that about you, don’t post about it online. It really didn’t take much time.”

“R…right.” Troy manages weakly. “I’m gonna go to the bathroom. Rozanov, I’ll be back. Shane, it was nice meeting you.”

“You too!”

Once Troy leaves, Shane directs his focus to Ilya. “Why are you looking at me like that?”

“Like what?”

“Like I killed your cat.”

“Why would you kill my cat?”

Shane rolls his eyes. “I wouldn’t. It’s an expression. You know, like you’re pissed.”

“I am not pissed.”

“Oh, good.”

A beat passes.

“How did you find his Instagram?”

Shane looks at him. “You follow him,” he says. “And you’ve tagged him in a few photos.”

“How did you find my Instagram?”

“Your username is *lRoz* but the I is a lowercase L.” Shane deadpans. “It wasn’t hard.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Why would I tell you?”

Ilya squints. “Have you been stalking me?”

“Of course not! I just wondered if you had any social media, especially after you joined Letterboxd.”

“I’ve been on Letterboxd.”

“Right, right, of course.” Shane answers. “I can follow you, if that would make your life easier.”

Ilya thinks.

Troy mentioned Shane had Instagram, he just didn’t want to investigate it himself.

He told himself he was respecting Shane’s privacy, and that it would be weird if he just started following him out of nowhere.

If he was being honest, he didn’t know if he would like what he found.

For all he knew, Shane had a long term partner or weird ex relationship in his past.

Which would be *fine*. Ilya just didn’t want to see it.

“I mean, sure.” Ilya decides. “If you’re ready to take that step with me, *Hollander*.”

“I’m ready to take some steps with you, *Rozanov*.”

Ilya smirks. “Fantastic.”

Shane smiles, suddenly glancing around as if he had said something damning. “I’ll see you later. Let me know when you’re on your way back, okay? Good. Great. Okay, bye.”

—

you have requested to follow shhollander!

you are now following shhollander! *2m ago*

🔒 shhollander

Shane Hollander *he/him*

(Not casual) hockey enjoyer

🔗 boxd.it/hollan3r

26 posts 36 followers 318 following

[image id — shane sitting on a dock, one leg on dock, other dangling below, smiling. sitting with man who is identified as hayden pike]

shhollander Soaking up the rays with @hpike ☀️

12 likes 3 comments

[image id — shane at a hockey game. photographed with yuna and david hollander]

shhollander Always happy to support the hometown! (Even with they suck. I guess.)

21 likes 6 comments

you are now following lRoz! *4m ago*

lRoz

ilya !! *he/him*

pretty fly for a bi guy

🔗 boxd.it/ily23

71 posts 628 followers 231 following

[image id — ilya standing on campus with troy and harris, ilya in the middle smiling wide]

lRoz !!! the boys (gays) are back btw !!!

612 likes 71 comments

[image id — ilya in a dog shelter with a small black labrador. collar reads “chiron”. harris is sitting just out of frame, but ilya tagged him anyways]

lRoz ten likes and harris gets him and we share custody of him

341 likes 24 comments

OCTOBER

The Tuna Melt incident happens early October 16.

Down the hall from Shane and Rozanov's dorm was a kitchen.

It was clean enough from what Shane had seen in passing, but he never took much time to investigate it.

He had a meal plan and didn't have the need.

Did he sometimes miss his mom and dad's cooking and desperately wish he could go home? Sure.

But the ability to cook their meals at school was never going to capture the same buzz as having his parents make them for him.

The only reason Shane goes is because he gets a text from Ilya at 2:30 in the morning.

Shane should be asleep.

He had an early morning exam and was trying his best to grind out any studying he could beforehand, even at the risk of ruining his curated sleep schedule.

Rozanov wasn't there, but he figured his roommate was out with Troy.

He had started sleeping over at his friend's dorm, and Shane didn't want to be too overbearing when it came to texts.

If Rozanov needed him, he would contact him himself.

And that's exactly what he did.

Rozanov:

you are awake yes?

Shane:

Barely, but yes. Why?

Rozanov:

come to the kitchen

and bring a ginger ale

and a coke

Shane:

Why?

Rozanov:

just do it. i promise you won't die

Shane:

I'll be right there. I can't stay long, though, I have to study for my exam I have tomorrow.

Today, technically.

So, Shane grabs their drinks from the fridge and walks down the hallway, trying his best to not make a sound in the process.

He knocks on the door first, before clicking it open to find Rozanov standing at the stove, a focused expression on his face.

It takes him a minute to realize Shane's entered, and he takes that minute to look at his roommate.

Shane prided himself on never seeing Rozanov in his pajamas.

Even when the two of them did movie nights, they tended to do those in their regular clothes and then change into pajamas after.

And since Shane's skincare routine was longer, Rozanov would wait and go after him.

By the time he was done, the room was dark and Shane was done interacting with people for the day. Sometimes they would text about a video one of them saw, but that was rare.

And when it did happen, it was brief.

As a result, Shane never saw Rozanov so laid back.

He was wearing dark blue sleep shorts, tall socks with his black and white converse and a purple oversized crew-neck. He was scratching the back of his calf with his foot and he looked so at *peace*.

There was music playing, Shane realized, and Rozanov was humming along with the beat while lightly moving something around in the pan.

Rozanov always looked a little uptight, even as he and Shane became friendly, so it was nice to know that there was a soft side to him.

There was also the fact that his curls were going crazy, which made Shane dizzy.

The way they were resting on his head and curling around his ears was truly mesmerizing, and he wished Rozanov didn't use so much product during the day.

He wasn't hiding them, per se, but he was muting them.

At that moment, between the songs playing, Shane clears his throat and pretends to close the door to ensure Rozanov didn't think he was staring.

"Took you long enough, Hollander." he says, turning to face him, a soft smile on his face. "My coke is probably cold by now!"

"There is a fridge." Shane advises.

Rozanov turns. "Is not a good fridge."

"Well, who's fault is that?"

"Not mine, Hollander." He looks back at the pan and pulls two plates from his bag on the floor, setting them on the counter. "You like tuna melts, yes?"

Shane glances at them. "Yes? Why…?"

"My mother used to make them."

Oh.

"Okay."

"I just wanted one." Rozanov continues, putting one on a plate and handing it to Shane. "I just figured I'd share."

"I appreciate it." Shane says softly, taking the plate.

Rozanov smiles and the two sit at the table, slowly taking bites.

It was *good*, Shane decided.

Everything was perfect.

Sure, his ginger ale was room temperature, but a room temperature ginger ale was better than no ginger ale at all.

"You don't really talk about your mother." Shane notes. "Or… your family in general. Or Russia, really."

Rozanov nods. "Yes."

"You don't post about them, either."

"Correct." Rozanov confirms.

"Is there… I don't know? A story there? I guess?"

Rozanov sets down his food and sighs.

It’s not angry or full of anything overtly negative, like Shane had expected. Rather, it’s soft. Like he’s been expecting this question since the two met.

And maybe he had.

Maybe he had been waiting for Shane to bring it up for two months.

“My mother died when I was twelve.” he says lowly.

It’s so low, Shane thinks he imagined it.

But there was no mistaking the way that Rozanov’s accent twisted and turned around the world twelve.

Shane doesn’t know what to say, so he simply nods.

“I left Russia when I was seventeen.” he continues quietly, not looking at Shane. “My brother is… difficult. He is older than me. It is difficult to talk to him about things. Real things, I mean.”

Shane continues to listen.

“He does not miss me. He has texted me once, and it was just about my father.” he says. “My father is old-fashioned. He was not abusive, but he had expectations. He is police, and he wanted me to… do something worthwhile. He… is dying. Dementia.”

Shane almost says something.

Almost asks a question.

But he can feel Rozanov almost breaking while telling the story, and didn’t want to make it worse.

Instead, slowly, he reached a hand on the table and holds his hand.

He expects Rozanov to flinch, but he looks at their joined hands and simply smiles.

“I left because he did not need me. He would hate who I am now. I did not see the point in living somewhere I was not accepted.”

He pauses.

Shane jumps. “Did you… did you have anyone? Before meeting Troy and Harris, I mean. Were you alone before college?”

He smiles weakly. “No.” he says. “I have a friend, Svetlana. She has citizenship here, but was born in Russia. She helped me get here and she let me live with her before school. I do not see her much, but I have her. She is the closest thing I have to a family now.”

Shane tightens his grip on Rozanov, desperate for his thoughts to get across.

I’m here for you.

I’m your friend.

You aren’t alone, not anymore.

It’ll be okay.

“My therapist told me it might be good to talk about it.” he says quietly. “I didn’t want to tell Troy or Harris.”

Shane nods. “I understand.” he pauses. “Tell me about her?”

And ~~Rozanov~~ Ilya does.

He tells him about her scent.

He tells him about how she would purse her lips when she would cook.

He tells him about how she would take Ilya to hockey games when he was younger.

He tells him about how when his brother was out late doing God knows what, she would spend time with Ilya.

He pauses.

Tells Shane she had bad days.

(“Like I have bad days.”)

Tells Shane his father was hard on her.

Tells Shane as much as he loves his mother, he doesn’t want to be like her.

(“She killed herself.” he admits. “I found her.”)

Shane wants nothing more than to hug him.

Instead, he loosens his grip and starts caressing his hand with his thumb, grounding Ilya to the moment.

The two sit there for a moment before Shane speaks.

His voice is cracked and broken from holding in tears.

He didn’t want to start crying in front of Ilya when he was one pouring his heart out.

“I’m sorry, Ilya.” he says slowly.

He looks at him. “Why are you sorry?”

“I’m sorry life has been unfair to you.”

“Life has not…”

Shane frowns. “Ilya, you found your mother dead when you were twelve.” *As if he needs a reminder.*

He imagines twelve year old Ilya.

Wide smile, curly hair. The boy in the photograph on his desk. A little older.

Maybe an inkling of his sexuality.

Twelve year old Ilya, innocently going to see his mother only to be met with something no child should ever have to see.

The dead, unmoving body of a loved one.

The loved one that had been there for him when nobody else was.

Twelve year old Ilya, having to tell someone.

Forced to keep it a secret.

Twenty year old Ilya, sitting in front of him, eyes wet with unfallen tears, still holding that guilt years later.

“No child should ever have to experience that,” he says. “She should have been by your side forever. She should have helped you come to the states if you wanted, maybe even come with you. You should have been able to come out to her. If you wanted. She should be here, now. Taking you to hockey games, now. Life cheated you out of that life, and I’m sorry. There aren’t enough words to express how sorry I am for you, Ilya.”

He catches Shane’s eye.

“I thought you weren’t going to call me that unless I was dying.”

Shane laughs. “I felt the situation called for it.”

“Thank you, Holl— *Shane*. Really, thank you.” he says quietly. He clears his throat. “If you tell anyone about this…”

“Nobody will believe me.”

“Yes.”

He moves to stand up before Shane has another thought.

“You having depression doesn’t mean you’re going to end up like her.” he says, voice soft. “You know that, right?”

Ilya's mouth curves in a small smile. "I'm starting to understand that."

"Good."

Later, Shane wonders why Rozanov decided to tell him about his mother.

There had been plenty of opportunities recently if he truly just wanted to without any explanation.

He gets his answer at 1:50 in the afternoon on October 16. Shane was walking out of his exam when he was scrolling Instagram.

Then, he saw it, the answer to a question he had been too afraid to ask.

It was a new post from Rozanov, it must have been posted when he was in his exam.

[image id — an old photo. ilya is standing next to a beautiful woman, likely irina. the two have matching smiles and are wearing mother/son hockey jerseys. ilya is likely ten/eleven years old in the picture]

lRoz <3 for you mama. miss you everyday. today most of all.

341 likes 41 comments

svetlana12 she would be so proud of you, ilya.

tbarrett thinking of you man ❤️

h8rris I see where you got your good looks from, Rozanov. (Sending love)

shhollander Sending hugs, Rozanov.

kswift you liking hockey was not on my bingo card. (<3 sending hugs)

lucaaahaaas 🫶🏻 hope you're okay, roz.

—

Ilya *loved* Halloween. It was one of the rare things he genuinely loved about living in the states.

The thing he loved most?

The *parties*.

His freshman year, he snuck into one of the frat houses and spent the entire Halloween-weekend with them.

They welcomed him with open arms, either because he was just that cool, or because they were too drunk to notice that he wasn't a part of their fraternity.

Either way, Ilya had a great night.

His sophomore year, he, Harris and Troy went to a drag show on campus. The three of them drank, danced, and cheered in the queens performing like their lives depended on it.

Ilya might have then spent the Monday after Halloween weekend nearly dead, hunched over his toilet, but it was an amazing memory before that.

And that was all that mattered.

This year, Ilya had one goal.

He was determined to somehow get Shane to go to the party Troy and Harris's friend Eric was throwing with him.

He had started dropping hints early in the week.

Just a "Y'know, they're having a party. It might be better than just sitting alone" whenever there was a momentary lull in the conversation.

Shane hadn't caught on, thank God.

Ilya understood why he was hesitant.

Shane had explained a few weeks before that large places and gatherings of people made him feel sick, especially if it was a lot of people didn't know.

But Ilya didn't want to go without him.

Because he knew if he did, Shane would spend the night by himself in the dark of their dorm, and Ilya being Ilya, he would just be thinking about him all night anyways.

It'd be a lot easier to think about him if they were in the same place all night.

Together. Side by side.

Ilya didn't know if his begging worked until Shane came into their dorm that Friday after his class.

His eyes were wide with something Ilya hadn't seen before and he was afraid he might do something reckless.

He had his pre-planned dialogue all ready.

He was going to point out that after a day of class, a party and get-together with friends was exactly what Shane needed to unwind.

Before he could get any of that out, though, Shane broke through the silence first.

“What time?”

Ilya looks up. “It’s 2pm Hollander.”

“Fuck off, that’s not what I meant.” he says. “What time is the party?”

Ilya’s eyes widen. “You mean…?”

“I mean.”

He smiles and nods. “It’s at 10.” he answers. “Troy and Harris said it’s gonna be at their friend’s apartment a few minutes from campus. Harris is gonna be the designated driver to get us there and back.”

“Fantastic.” Shane says.

There’s something about his tone that stops Ilya’s excitement.

It’s not laced with excitement or anything similar. Rather, it feels like there’s malice.

Not aimed at Ilya, per se, but there.

“Why the sudden change in heart?” Ilya asks, against his better judgement.

Shane frowns. “Somebody in my lecture accused me of being boring.”

That was an objective fact, Ilya thought.

He found comfort in the boring nature of Shane Hollander, though. He was consistent.

He woke up at the same time, he had a strict diet he rarely strayed from, he had a shower schedule, he had a skin care routine, he always called his parents at the same time every week.

Boring was just a rude way of saying that thing that Ilya came to love about his roommate.

He, of course, couldn’t say any of that.

The last thing he wanted was to accidentally out his feelings for him in the process of trying to give him a compliment.

“And you think going to a party is going to prove them wrong?” Ilya asks slowly.

“Yes.” Shane replies through gritted teeth. “He only said something because I, stupidly, told the class my plan for this weekend was to stay inside and watch *Rocky Horror.*”

“*I would love to watch* Rocky Horror *with you.*” Ilya wants to say.

The words dance on his tongue slowly. But no. No matter the reason, Shane was clearly committed to the party. They could do that tomorrow.

“Having a night in doesn’t make you boring.” he says instead. “But, if you’re sure about coming, it’ll be the best night out you’ve ever had!”

“And the only.” Shane supplies unhelpfully.

“Starting it off with a bang, Hollander!”

Eric’s apartment was smaller than Ilya assumed it was.

From the little information Ilya knew, he had graduated in May and had been dating Kyle since his senior year and Kyle’s sophomore.

He never asked for background about how they got together, because whenever he mentioned it around him, Kyle would flush uncontrollably.

That might have just been a side effect of being in love, but as far as Ilya knew, he didn’t do that when someone brought up how he and Shane met.

By the time Shane, Ilya, Harris and Troy got there, the apartment was more or less packed.

Everyone was singing whatever vague pop song was playing from the speaker perfectly positioned on the open windowsill and the overhead lights were off, leaving the place only lit by a few string lights.

All in all, the apartment was nice.

Ilya’s eyes found Kyle and Eric immediately.

It was hard to miss them. Eric was a big guy, and the two of them were obsessed with each other.

When Ilya caught their eye, Kyle had Eric shoved against a wall and the two were making out in front of most people at the party.

Shane turns to Ilya and above the music manages, “I’m gonna go get a drink!” before slipping into the crowd.

Ilya watches him go, feeling the loss of him by his side almost immediately.

“You really have to either make a move or get over him.” Harris says, directly into his ear.

Ilya frowns. “Yeah, I know,” he answers, venturing to find a drink of his own.

Ilya liked parties.

He thrived at parties.

Especially when the host of said party stocked his fridge full of the best low-budget beer money could buy.

So, Ilya grabbed two cans, popped both of them open, and downed them each with ease.

He could feel the buzz almost immediately, and when he did, he allowed himself to relax.

He could be in the same place as Shane without freaking out. It was possible for him to act semi-normal in the presence of his roommate.

So, that's what he was going to do.

The song playing was something about a secret, and Ilya found himself easily dancing to it with everyone else.

He wasn't sure where Shane ended up, but he didn't let himself focus on it.

Instead, he allowed the music to overtake him, shaking him to the core.

Eric and Kyle had stopped sloppily making out at that point, opting to go their separate ways.

As separate as they could get at this party, anyways.

Which… where *did* Shane go? The apartment had two bedrooms, and one and a half bath. There was no way he really could get that far from Ilya.

The song changes. It's slower than he had expected for a second, but Ilya recognizes it immediately.

Three in the morning making love.

Ilya catches Shane's eye.

Laid on the floor of your apartment.

Shane catches Ilya's eye.

Bird's eye view of the two of us.

Ilya starts walking to Shane, the alcohol fully taking over.

He was known for having drinks affect him rather quickly, but he didn't realize it had been enough time.

Face in makeup and cheap fake blood.

"Hey." Shane says lowly.

His words are slightly slurring, but Ilya doesn't have enough morality in him to react.

He should tell Shane to take a break.

He sees the drink in his friend's hand.

He notices the far-off look in his eye.

He recognizes that Shane was probably highly uncomfortable in the situation.

But he was there.

Because someone told him he was boring.

And Shane decided he had to “fix” that.

Never really said that I loved you too.

“*You really have to make a move.*” Harris had said. He had said more than that, Ilya was almost positive.

Hearing the song and seeing Shane though, he seemed to forget everything else in the world.

He was wearing a black cropped tank top with flowy black pants with some makeup on his eyelid and Ilya was in love with him.

Being in love, being drunk and making rational decisions didn’t mesh well, Ilya found.

I don’t think I realize just how much I miss you sometimes.

“Hi.” Ilya says then, suddenly aware he hadn’t said anything in response.

The two of them had started dancing together during the song, but they were doing it in silence.

As the song was fading out, Ilya made a choice.

He brings his hands up to Shane’s face, cupping him as gently as he could manage.

Back then we were just creatures in heaven.

Slowly, he steps forward.

They were already close, but with his hands on Shane’s face, closing the distance felt bigger.

Creatures in heaven.

Shane doesn’t pull back.

Instead, Ilya feels him wrap his arms around his waist, pulling himself impossibly closer to him.

Creatures in heaven.

As softly as he can manage, Ilya closes the gap.

He kisses Shane Hollander.

He kisses his roommate.

He kisses his best friend.

Ilya tightens his hold on his face impossibly tighter and slips his tongue in Shane's mouth.

Distantly, he notices the taste of cheap beer.

Recognizes that—

Shane kisses him back.

We were just creatures in heaven.

And Ilya's knees threaten to fall under him. He leans closer, lightly licking Shane's lip.

Shane, to his shock, reciprocates, slightly grinding against Ilya.

Just as quickly as it started, it stops.

Shane puts sudden distance between them, ending the warmth and comfort that Ilya had found with him.

Ilya frowns.

"I… I'm going to go." Shane says evenly.

"W-what?" Ilya questions. "It's only…"

"It's midnight." he interrupts, his voice slightly panicked, words still slurring. "I'm going to go."

"Shane, you're drunk."

"I'll get an Uber, Rozanov."

Ilya wants to chase after.

Wants to tell him he's in love with him.

Wants to tell him so *much*.

Instead, he watches Shane leave, the sensation of his kiss still warm on Ilya's lips.

—

r/roommates

Posted by hollan3r • 4hr ago

i don’t have a title for this thats how bad it is

yeah i’m back.

i have also lost the ability to function so if youve seen me before and are expecting the clarity i usually type with youre in the wrong place this time around.

for those of you that dont know me, ive been here a few times because i realized i was gay and might be slightly in love with my roommate who i started off as hating only to.. well yknow. i just said love.

you can make your own conclusions.

he kissed me at a friends party. i was pretty overstimulated the entire time, which was not his fault. but i kissed him back and realized what i was doing and i left.

i walked out of the party and am waiting outside in the cold waiting for my ride to show up.

my hands are freezing and he has texted me three times since i walked out. but he has made no effort to come find me.

i just felt the need to give an update. if you have advice, speak your truths please im panicking at the thought of seeing him again tomorrow.

running away would make me a coward but it is very tempting giving how much my head is already pounding.

6.1k comments

u/w3rprks 218 points • 3hr ago

not to say i foresaw this but i did foresee this!

u/land3y 312 points • 3hr ago

crazy to watch an enemies to lovers arc happen right before my eyes my head is spinning

u/hrrs 518 points • 3hr ago

Wait a second. I have to do brief research and I’ll get back to you, op. Hope you’re okay in the meantime.

u/hrrs 518 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/hrrs*

Oh my god. Op please don’t tell me your room number is 212.

u/hollan3r 718 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/hrrs*

I don't know why you're asking, but yes, it is.

u/hrrs 518 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/hollan3r*

Oh my God. There is no way.

u/wulfbrd 123 points • 1hr ago

i told you he was flirting with you, op. but nooo that can't be possible! bond with my roommate?? not before he'll freezes over!!

u/hollan3r 718 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/wulfbrd*

I never said I wouldn't do it until hell freezes over. That would be far too impossible. I don't want the guy to hate me forever, do I?

u/wulfbrd 123 points • 1hr ago

→ *replying to u/hollan3r*

kind of sounds like you did. maybe not anymore.

Unknown Number:

It's Harris, Ilya's friend. Kyle got me your number from Kip. I'm also hrrs on Reddit. But that's less important.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN THE TWO OF YOU KISSED.

I noticed Ilya left in a rush a little bit after you did, but I didn't think it had to do with *you*.

I demand details once you sober up properly. Or I could just stalk your Reddit, I guess.

NOVEMBER

They were right back where they started, Shane realized with a punch to the gut.

Gone were the movie nights.

That was replaced by Rozanov sitting at his desk with his headphones on, watching his own movie.

Gone was the tag “with roommate” when he would eventually log those movies. Not only gone from his new reviews, but he went back and deleted the tag in its entirety.

That was replaced by “with friends” when Rozanov would presumably see Troy and Harris and watch films with them instead.

Shane wasn’t jealous.

He just desperately wanted to watch a horror movie with him and accidentally get a little too close when there was a jumpscare.

He wanted to sit through a romance and watch Rozanov melt as the two leads fell for each other.

He wanted for the two of them to be able to express their celebrity crushes without having to filter themselves.

Shane being able to admit he found a man attractive and Rozanov able to say he found men and women—

It didn’t matter.

Gone were the notes the two would share.

In their place was the water bottle Shane bought Rozanov haphazardly thrown onto his side of the room, full of mold.

Shane cleaned it and put it back on Rozanov’s desk, only to come back from his class to it having been thrown on the floor again.

It wasn’t like Shane was exactly trying, either.

November was a hard month for him mentally.

American Thanksgiving was coming up, and he was jumping at the opportunity to travel home.

Even though his dad would likely be at work, Thursday night football with his mom and dad was better than being stuck in a dorm with him.

All Shane had to do was get through the month.

He’d go home and have a break from everything.

He wanted to go home and tell them he was gay.

He wanted to go home and tell them he fell in love with his roommate.

He wanted to go home and tell them they might get to meet his roommate turned boyfriend over Christmas.

That was gone too.

Flushed down the drain and long away in the ocean.

Shane also couldn't talk to anyone about it.

Everyone at the party knew Rozanov, most of them were friends with him.

So he couldn't go to any of them complaining about it, because they would likely immediately go to Rozanov and tell him what Shane had said.

Instead, he kept his feelings inside until November 17.

That was when he got tired of keeping inside (and venting to Reddit, which hardly counted) and went to Scott's door.

He felt bad enough knocking at 11:45pm, but he was so sick he felt like he would throw up.

So, even though when he got there he noticed his lights were off, he banged on the door again and again and again.

"Hunter! I know you're awake!" he says between knocks. He bangs again.

"I'm not home, actually."

He turns around to see Scott smiling softly in a sweatshirt and sweatpants, some visible sweat on his forehead.

"I was going for a run. What's going on?"

"Where's Kip?"

Scott frowns. "He's at work. He stayed overtime to help his friend with her assignment. Apparently she's freaking out over one of her final projects and it's due next week."

He opens the door and clicks on the light with Shane following close behind.

Scott moves to take off his sweatshirt, opting to wear a pajama shirt, and once he starts the motion, Shane turns.

He did not need to see shirtless Scott Hunter right now.

"I'm done."

"Thank you."

"So, come on, sit down. What's going on? You know what time it is, right? Don't you usually __"

“I’m breaking the rules.”

His RA stops dead in his tracks. “What?”

“You told me your door was closed for me to talk about Rozanov,” he says. “I’m breaking the rule.”

“You’ve broken the rule a lot, kid. But, sure, go for it. What’s going on with Rozanov now? Did he spit on your grave in a dream or something?”

Shane inhales, exhales a shaky breath. “No.”

“Well, come on, don’t leave me hanging. What happened?” he pauses. “Did he walk in on you… you know…?”

Shane stares at him, eyes wide.

“What! No!” he shouts. “You think I was… in our shared room? Have you ever…? Actually, no. Don’t tell me.”

“I won’t tell you.”

He pinches the bridge of his nose. “We kissed.”

“No we didn’t, Shane.”

“Not *us* Scott. God you really are difficult.” Shane says. “*Rozanov* and I. We kissed.”

Shane never prided himself on catching on when people had facial reactions to things.

There were occasions when Rozanov would point out how he reacted to something, but that was never a skill Shane himself picked up.

In that moment, though, he watched as Scott took in the information.

His eyebrows shot up.

He stopped mindlessly hanging clothes.

He turned his body to Shane and stared.

“You…”

“And Rozanov.”

“Kissed.”

“Yes.”

Scott’s face breaks into the widest smile Shane had ever seen on his face when his boyfriend wasn’t in the room.

“I’m proud of you, Shane! Holy shit! I feel like my little brother finally bagged his crush!”

Shane manages a weak laugh. “Yeah, right.”

He smiles at Scott calling him his little brother, but other than that, he didn’t find much more to smile about.

The way Scott was talking gave the impression that they were dating.

Bagged his crush implied he was no longer his crush and was his boyfriend in replacement.

Scott must pick up on this, because his smile falls and he looks at Shane inquisitively.

“Wait… what… what happened? This could’ve been a text if everything… Shane? What happened?”

“Well…” Shane starts. “We were both drunk at a Halloween party and he hasn’t really spoken to me properly since. Harris mentioned he left soon after I did, but I don’t think that was related.”

Scott stared at him. “Oh my God.”

“What?”

“Kip told me Kyle mentioned Rozanov seemed down since Halloween. Less active in the group chat.”

Shane frowns. “You don’t think…”

Scott pulls out his phone, scrolling through what Shane could only assume were past texts with his boyfriend.

He hands Shane the phone. “Here.”

November 7

Kip ❤️:

hey have you noticed anything weird with rozanov?

Scott:

Not recently, no. I haven’t seen him. Why?

Kip ❤️:

kyle just said he’s been distant since halloween

Scott:

Halloween? Did something happen? Didn't you mention Eric was having a party?

Kip ❤️:

yeah, the party we were invited to.

you're thinking something happened at the party to put him in a mood?

why wouldn't he tell his friends?

Scott:

Rozanov is an odd one, sweetheart.

Maybe suggest that? See if anyone else there noticed anything weird?

You could always talk to Shane. I'm pretty sure they're friends now. Friendlier at the very least.

Kip ❤️:

yeah that's a good point.

thanks, love !! i'll see if shane knows anything.

i'll be back soon. wait for me to get dinner?

Scott:

You know it, sweetheart.

"He was being weird because…" Shane frowns. "If he had something to say, why didn't he just talk to me?"

"Would you have listened to him? If he did, I mean."

Shane thinks for a moment.

His gut reaction is to say of course. It would take a lot for him to not want to talk to Rozanov.

Then again, he was only in the current situation because he refused to communicate with him.

But, if Rozanov had approached him. If Rozanov had talked to him and started the conversation himself?

Shane might have listened.

He might have taken time to pay attention to how he said things. Explain why he decided to kiss him.

Explain if it was a one time thing.

He was assuming that if Rozanov wanted to talk to him, then he would've.

He kissed you, too.

He was drunk, too.

Maybe he thinks you're just being distant for no reason and doesn't remember the kiss.

Maybe you hallucinated the entire thing.

He frowns and shakes his head.

"I don't know," he admits quietly. "What… I feel like asking you how you got with Kip is a boundary."

Scott smiles. "Not really. I'll spare you the details, but we got back from our first date and I kissed him. I couldn't leave the date without doing it. We were at my dorm and he asked if I had a roommate. I didn't. The rest is history, more or less."

Shane sighs. "I want that." he says. "With him."

"Yeah, I figured." Scott laughs. "You get a starry look in your eye whenever I talk about him."

"What… what am I supposed to do?"

Scott grins. "I'm not a gay guru, Shane. *But* as a romance guru, you can ask Kip for confirmation on that, I would say. Give him some time. Don't be cold with him. But see what happens when you give him space. If there was a lot running in your head, he was probably going just as insane if not worse. Maybe in December, after the break, talk to him. Just so you can go home for winter knowing where you stand. So you can come back in January knowing what the dynamic is."

Shane nods. "You're a pretty good gay guru if you ask me." he says through shaky breaths.

"I'll tell Kip you said so."

—

Ilya didn't like distance.

Even if he put it there, he hated it.

There were moments when he hated the distance between him and his brother.

Distance he put there.

He hated the distance between him and Svetlana. Sure, she lived in the states, but she was miles away.

Because he wanted to go to college.

The distance with Hollander, he hated most of all.

Because there was no blaming Hollander, not really.

Sure, he was the one who ran out of Eric's party without saying anything.

And yeah, he was the one who actively ignored Ilya's texts he was frantically sending while hiding in the too cramped half-bath.

But since then? Hollander was clearly trying to still be… something with him.

He just wouldn't let him. He was putting distance between them even if their dorm didn't allow for the special distance he desperately wanted.

Because whatever Hollander wanted from their relationship going forward, it was clearly not what Ilya wanted.

Ilya, at his core, desired everything with Hollander.

If he thought he had fallen deep in September, imagining their bodies in bed together, laughing softly and peacefully existing with each other, then he was worse off now.

After the kiss, he kept repeating everything.

The song.

The way the lyrics wrapped around Ilya as he held Hollander like he might vanish.

The way everyone around them had no idea what was happening between him and Hollander.

The way, in that moment, nothing other than what was happening between him and Hollander mattered.

Because he was kissing him.

He was holding him close, desperate to keep him there for as long as the universe allowed.

The universe, apparently, had a cruel sense of humor.

And Ilya was fine with that, really. Sure, he still had to live with Hollander and look at him every single day, but once the semester ended, he would move out.

He e-mailed housing preemptively just to ensure that he would be able to do so. They were happy to reply back and tell him that starting December 12, he would be able to reapply for housing and move in January if he was approved.

He had no plans to go home for Christmas break, so his hope was that he'd be able to get approved and then move out before Hollander came back from celebrating the holiday with his picture perfect family.

In the meantime, Ilya spent as much time as possible away from his room.

Even if that meant staying with Troy and Harris for twelve hours a day.

He would rather do that than see Hollander knowing that he couldn't do what he wanted to.

It was on the way back to his dorm after one of those days, taking the long way, when his phone buzzed in his hand.

He had spent the entire day desperately trying to avoid Hollander as a topic with either of them despite their best efforts to get him to open up.

He insisted that he was fine, even when Harris insisted that Hollander felt the same way.

Harris tried to convince him that he found Hollander on a social media site where he spent his time talking about his mysterious "roommate" and their bond.

Because he was smart, however, Ilya ignored it.

He knew better.

Hollander didn't feel the same way, and that was fine. He was getting by. Slowly but surely.

So, when his phone buzzed, he assumed it was a text from one of them.

Instead, it was a phone call.

The caller ID promptly read "*Svetlana* 🫶".

He hadn't talked to her properly since everything happened.

When he told Hollander she was the closest thing he had to family, what he really meant was she might as well bug his older sister.

As a result, she knew all.

She knew when something was wrong, even when he was in Russia and she was in the states.

How she managed to do that, Ilya was unsure.

He inhaled and accepts the call.

"*Ilya. Why are your friends messaging me?*"

Ilya smiles, excited to speak in Russian for longer than a few minutes.

Whenever he was alone, he took the chance to talk to himself in his native language, but outside of that, he never brought out the language.

Svetlana tended to only use Russian, which was a massive comfort to him.

"*Excuse me?*"

"*Troy and Harris? I think?*" she continues. "*Are you moping, Ilya?*"

Ilya groans.

Moping.

He wanted to punch Svetlana. "*I do not mope.*"

"*If you say 'Russians do not mope' I will fly my ass down there and punch you.*"

"*That is not sane.*" Ilya says.

"*So again… are you moping?*"

"*Maybe.*"

He feels Svetlana nod. "*Great. So, what's his name?*"

Ilya rolls his eyes. He desperately wants to ask her what Troy and Harris said, but he knew that she wouldn't answer him in the way she wanted her to.

"*Shane.*"

"*And you love Shane?*"

"*And I love Shane.*"

"*And you are… what? Being difficult for the sake of being difficult?*"

Ilya inhales. "*Difficult?*"

"*Yes. You are being difficult. You live with Shane, do you not? How are you…?*"

"*I have been avoiding him.*"

"*Difficult.*"

"*Great, thank you for your input.*"

Svetlana laughs. "*So you are in love with him. And he kissed you back. And he has made multiple posts talking about falling for his roommate. So, what is the problem?*"

Ilya groans.

"*Self sacrifice isn't the answer, Ilya.*"

"*It is not…*"

"*Yes it is. You are sacrificing your own happiness because you… what? Think Shane does not deserve you?*"

"*I did not say that*."

"*You didn't have to*."

"*Do you see where I'm coming from?*"

"*No. No I don't. You're my friend, Ilya. One of my best friends. And my life greatly improved when you came into my life*." she says quietly, an action Ilya knows she does when she wants him to focus on what she's saying. So he can't focus on something else. "*And Shane is no different. You have clearly made an impact with him*."

"*Not enough. He could have talked to me.*"

"*And you could have talked to him.*"

"*But I haven't*."

"*But you could*."

Ilya sighs. "*And you think I should?*"

"*I very clearly think you should*."

"*Great. Thank you. I feel really great about this discussion*."

Svetlana laughs. "*This wasn't to make you feel better, Ilya. This was to give you a reality check.*"

"*Consider my reality checked.*"

—

Traveling home was exactly what Shane needed.

The actual drive was hell.

But getting to see his parents after months? *That* was exactly what he needed.

Once he got to their house, a weight hit him square in the chest. He knew exactly what he had to do, even if the thought made him feel sick to his stomach.

He was significantly more screwed than he would like to be because he already texted his mom that he had something important to talk about with her and his dad. She had responded almost immediately, telling him that whatever he had to tell them, they would back him one hundred percent.

Because that's the kind of parents they were.

When there was a problem, their goal was never to *fix* it, per se, their goal was always to handle it. And that was a goal that Shane proudly carried into his own life. Whenever he had a problem, he never attempted to fix it.

He just wanted to handle it.

So, when he sat down at dinner with his parents, he sat across from them, as he always did. To his right was an empty seat, likely where Rozanov would be sitting right now if Shane hadn't royally screwed everything up. He would be able to come out to his parents with his boyfriend by his side.

Coming in with painfully unhelpful quips every once in a while, but he would there, and that was all Shane would need.

Just to know he wasn't alone in everything.

Right now?

He was the definition of alone.

Sure, he told Scott that he was planning on coming out to his parents. In response, he made a comment about how he never had to do that, but wished Shane the best of luck. He told him he hoped his parents were as understanding and accepting as Kip's parents were.

Ten minutes later, Shane received a text from Kip himself, sending Shane love.

So, sure, he had his small queer corner surrounding him, but they were miles away, celebrating Thanksgiving with Kip's family. His wonderful, supportive, accepting family.

While Shane sat across from his parents for what could be the last time depending on how they reacted to the simple bombshell he was about to drop.

He ran through worse case scenarios the entire drive.

They could easily tell him that they no longer had a son. That they tried *so hard* for one, and they were deeply disappointed that the one child they had turned out to be unnatural.

Looking at them now, Yuna and David Hollander, his *parents*, though, he inhaled.

He wanted to get it over with.

If they wanted him out, he wanted to know that before he managed to fully digest his food. In his experience, it was harder to throw up fully digested pasta than it was to throw up water and bile. But that was just his history.

"Shane, honey? Are you okay?" his mother asks, voice soft.

Of course she caught on.

He could feel himself getting more and more pale the longer he sat there, just staring at them.

“I wanted to talk to you guys about something.” His voice is uncharacteristically small. He wonders if his mother even heard him say anything or if she just assumed he exhaled.

But, his father nods. “What’s going on?”

“I… I don’t want this to change how either of you see me.”

“Whatever it is, we love you, sweetie.”

I know dies on his tongue. Because, does he? Does he really know?

“I… I’m gay.” he says quietly. If he says it any louder, he might die.

The words hang there while he waits for his parents to say something. To scream, shout, cry, to *something*.

But neither of them do anything.

His mother sets her fork down. That’s the first sign that he hasn’t killed them. Good sign. She takes a sip of her wine and nods slowly.

She doesn’t say anything, though.

Yuna didn’t need permission to speak, but she did like to tackle things with David, once he came to his own conclusion.

His father sets his piece of bread down and smiles softly, exhaling a soft breath.

So, that’s *where I get it from.*

“Please say something.” Shane begs.

“Sweetie… look at me.”

He didn’t realize it, but at some point, he must have closed his eyes. Slowly, he opens them to be greeted with his mother smiling at him, unfallen tears hanging in her eyes.

“I’m sorry.” he manages slowly. “I’m really sorry. I know this isn’t… what you wanted. Or probably what you expected. I just, I couldn’t lie to either of you anymore. This…”

His father laughs quietly. “*Shane*, from the way you were acting, we were worried you got someone pregnant. You being gay is okay. I’d prefer that over the pregnancy thing, myself.” Shane watches his mother kick her husband under the table. “*What*?”

“This isn’t the time for jokes, David.”

“I’d actually prefer jokes over… you know.”

His mother gasps, clutching her heart with her hand. He winces. “*Shane*. What did you think was going to happen?”

“You never know.” he says quietly.

“Sweetheart.” she tells him slowly. “You are our son. We love you. Nothing in the world could ever change that. Least of all who you fall in love with.”

He cracks a smile at that.

His mind, despite his best efforts, wanders to Ilya.

He wonders how he’s spending his Thanksgiving break. Likely staying at their dorm, or with Troy and Harris.

He desperately wishes he could have invited him.

He wished the two of them could have a holiday together. He wanted to see Ilya in this element, happy and soft.

“What is that look?” his mother inquires.

Shane bites his lip. “What look?”

“The look on your face.” she replies, like it’s the most obvious thing in the world. “It’s exactly how I used to look at your… oh. *Oh*! Is there… someone special?”

“Kind of? Not really, though.”

“Well, which is it?”

His father stands. “I’m going to get some wine. This… feels like a you guys conversation. I do love you though, son. You know that, right?”

Shane nods as his father heads for the kitchen.

“Not really.” he decides, turning back to his mother. “I mean… there is this guy, but I kind of blew it.”

“You blew it?” she questions. “What happened?”

Shane frowns. “You remember my roommate?”

“Rozanov?”

“Ilya.” Shane corrects. “But yes.”

“Of course. You complained about him nonstop at the start of the semester.”

Shane waits. “It’s him,” he says. “I… realized I was gay because I was falling for him.”

“Oh sweetheart.” she answers softly. “Is he…?”

“No, he’s bisexual. I just… we kissed on Halloween.” he tells her, exhaling a breath he didn’t realize he had been holding. “But I panicked and ran away. He’s been weird and distant since then.”

His mother smiles. “Have you tried talking to him? Being direct? I know you tend to react better when people do that for you. Maybe Ro— *Ilya* is the same way?”

“Yeah that’s what Scott told me.”

“Scott?”

“Hunter. My RA.”

“Scott Hunter, your friend Scott Hunter is your RA? Who you go to for love advice before your mother?”

“In my defense, I wasn’t out to you. He’s gay too, and I… I don’t know. I found a community with him.”

“Well, at the very least, I’m glad you’ve had someone in your corner.” she says. “But, seriously. Talk to Ilya. I’m sure he’s panicking just as much as you. A conversation might do you both some good.”

Shane nods. “Thank you, mom.”

Slowly, Yuna stands, and Shane follows.

In an easy, fluid motion, she wraps her arms around him. “I love you, son.” she says, voice muffled by his shoulder. “And Ilya would be lucky to be loved by you too.”

“I love you too, mom.” he tells her, holding her.

Shane:

Happy Thanksgiving, Rozanov.

Ilya:

happy thanksgiving shane

DECEMBER

Hollander was coming back today.

Hollander was coming back today.

Hollander was coming back today as in Ilya had to exist in the room with him again.

Over the break, the two of them had a few instances of texting, but those conversations were short.

A “how are you” here, a “look at this meme I found” there. But, Hollander had done him the courtesy of letting him know when he was driving back, which that was more than Ilya assumed he was going to do.

Plus, it was nice to have a heads up for when he had to get over himself.

He had to exist with Hollander for a week and a half before never having to see him again.

Which Ilya could do, no problem. He had done a lot worse than deal with someone he kissed and was in love with.

It was 6pm when the door unlocked.

Ilya turns to find Hollander, standing there, hands empty.

Despite having gone home for an entire break, he seemingly came back with nothing.

Ilya stood up, biting his tongue to not make a joke about his lack of luggage, when Hollander moved.

He figured he was going back out the dorm to get his things, so it was a real shock when he walked over to Ilya, grabbed him and lightly shoved him so his back was to their door.

Ilya let out a small moan at the contact, which he quickly swallowed.

Whatever Hollander wanted, it was not that.

That would be wishful thinking, and Ilya knew better than to wishfully think when it came to Hollander.

“I thought Canadians were polite.”

Hollander glances at him. “I am very polite. I could have pinned you on my bed for this conversation.”

Ilya gulps. “Excuse me?”

“You’ve been avoiding me.”

“I would argue *you’ve* been avoiding *me*.” Ilya insists, even though he knew that was a lie.

“We both know that’s bullshit.”

He nods. “Maybe it is.” he answers. “To ease your mind, Hollander, I am going to apply for a room change. I’ll be out of your hair come January. Until then…”

“I don’t want you out of my hair, Ilya.”

He glances up, eyes finally meeting Hollander's.

They're soft, but there's desperation behind them. Like he was looking at what he wanted most in the world and nothing was going to stop him from getting it.

Maybe he was.

Maybe Ilya was…

No.

Wishful thinking, Rozanov.

"Excuse me?"

"I don't want you out of my hair."

"I heard what you said."

"Then why did you…?"

He groans, rolling his eyes. "I want context. What do you mean you don't want me out of your hair?"

"I mean, I want you to stay."

"But you hate me."

"I don't hate you, Ilya." Hollander insists. "I don't think I ever did. Not really, anyways. Sure, you're annoying."

"This is a great speech so far, Shane."

"*But* you're also kind." he continues, lightly lacing their fingers together. "Hell, Ilya, you gave me a sexuality crisis at the age of twenty because you were too pretty."

Ilya's brain short circuits.

He knew Shane being gay was new. He gathered that much when he was audibly petrified to come out to him. He just didn't realize how new.

He definitely didn't realize that he was the cause.

Instead of being smart, Ilya folds. "You think I'm pretty?"

Shane laughs at that. And god, did Ilya miss his laugh.

"I don't think there's a word in any language to describe how beautiful I think you are." he says. "I implied them. When we were watching *Dirty Dancing*."

Ilya pauses.

When the two of them had watched the film, Shane had spent most of the time talking about the male lead and how attractive he thought he was.

He was right, of course.

But Ilya didn't think much of it at the time. So what? Shane, a young gay guy, found the male lead hot. It was to be expected.

"Excuse me?"

"Do you not see the resemblance?" Shane questions, his prior confidence seeping out of him like a dam.

Ilya frowns. "Resemblance of… what?"

"Of you and him."

"Not really, no." he says. "He was a much better dancer than me. And I don't think I could do the lift at the end. Women… they are not easy to manhandle."

"It's not manhandling, Ilya." Shane tells him. "It's a dance. It's an art form."

"Whatever you say." he inches ever so slightly closer to Shane. "So, you think he's hot because…?"

"I think he's hot because he's hot. The fact that you two look similar… is a bonus."

They stay like that for a moment before Ilya speaks.

"Why didn't you say something?" he asks. "Before?"

"You didn't say anything to me." Shane says quietly. His words are accusing, but there's nothing similar in his tone. "I thought… I don't know. I thought you regretted what happened at Halloween."

Ilya shakes his head. "The only thing I regret is not doing it sooner. Or since."

Shane smiles. "So, you'd like to do it again."

Ilya nods. "Very much. I would like to do it a lot more often. If you'd let me. Potentially."

Shane shrugs and leans forward. He's so close, his next words may as well be on Ilya's lips. "I'd let you do it forever."

With that, Ilya leans forward and closes the gap.

There wasn't much space between them to begin with, but feeling Shane kiss him back and grind against him made everything feel real.

He brought his hands up, cupping his face, running his fingers up and down his freckles.

Shane makes a sound deep in his throat, which Ilya almost immediately giggles at.

"*What*?"

"Nothing!" he says through laughs. He kisses the tip of Shane's nose. "You are just cute, that's all."

Shane smiles. "Oh."

"Take a compliment." Ilya says, kissing his forehead. "It won't kill you. I promise."

"You can't make that promise." Shane says, wrapping his arms around Ilya's waist. It's a simple enough motion, but Ilya feels his knees buckle.

"Yes, I can." he insists. "I just did."

And when Shane kisses him again, Ilya closes his eyes and soaks it all in.

This time, the universe doesn't laugh.

It just basks the pair in the setting sun and their inaudible laughs.

Exactly like Ilya had always wanted.

—

hollan3r logged *When Harry Met Sally…*

★★★★★ • rewatched 3 December

Watched one of my all time favorites with my favorite person. Happy to announce he loved it.

with boyfriend, comfort film, men <3

ily23 logged *When Harry Met Sally…*

★★★★★ • watched 3 December

no you don't get it they loved each other the entire time through everything.

he loves that it takes her an hour to order a sandwich. i love that it takes *my* bf an hour to order a sandwich too harry !! you're not cool !!

with boyfriend, comfort <3

"Beefing with Harry Burns is insane."

Ilya rolls his eyes. "He deserves it." he says. "And I want his sweater collection."

Shane sits for a moment. “Boyfriend? By the way?”

“You said the same thing, didn’t you?” he asks, turning to face him. “On your tags.”

“Yes but I didn’t want to assume.”

“Assume away.” Ilya tells him, kissing him soundly, just because that’s something he can do now. “Just this once.”

End Notes

i’m going to take the longest nap ever now!! comments and kudos are welcome and appreciated

twitter is electriktch if you dare

if i missed any tags or notes please comment or dm me on twitter i’d be happy to make some changes!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!