

## Blue Bliss

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# Blue Bliss

by Anonymous

## Summary

“Well, if it’s not too much trouble,” Shane begins, offering his cell phone to one of Santa’s helpers who remains on standby. “Can I—can *we* get a couple of photos with you?”

“Oh, but of course,” Santa cheers happily, clasping both gloved hands together as Shane moves to sit on his left thigh. “I would be honoured to snap a photo with *the* Shane Hollander.”

Ilya, on the other hand, nearly goes into cardiac arrest.

It's days after Christmas and Santa Claus is still working dutifully at the mall. There's just one problem, though: Ilya Rozanov is fully convinced that Santa Claus wants *his* man.

It's been a little over five months since Shane and Ilya have been official, and it's almost inconceivable how... easy it has been for them.

*Opposites attract.*

*Soulmates.*

Ilya has always believed those two sentiments were rather cliché, terribly intangible things, pathetic worldviews that took shape entirely from skewed perceptions and damn-near daunting desperation; but now that he's *living* it—now that he's nothing more than a walking testimony, it would be foolish of him to deny the harsh truths that manage to dismantle the solidity of his nervous system every day.

Truthfully, it can be described as a puzzle piece that fits perfectly—two kindred souls that were fated to meet, destined to be in each other's lives, their union that was seemingly written among the stars above.

And here *Ilya's* kindred soul stands before him—a bashful smile tugs at Shane's lips as he raises a hand to press a wrinkle from the lapel, a palm smoothing over the material before he adjusts the article of clothing that hugs his body just right.

But there's just one thing that Ilya *cannot* ignore.

He feels the warmth against his palm and cocks his head to the side, his lips pressing into a thin line. "I thought you said you hired a stylist, Hollander?"

The implication cuts through the air like a knife, the sharpened edge of it aimed straight for Shane's jugular—

—but it all comes from a place of *love*, of course.

There's something about the fashion choices themselves (yes, plural) that Ilya cannot get behind. Shane slowly spins, as if he's giving Ilya a chance to get a good fucking look at him, as if he's allowing Ilya to recognise his greatness and to take back what he said.

*Come on, look at me!* Shane's eyes seem to say, glinting with offence that Ilya refuses to take seriously. *Why would I need my damn stylist?*

"Uh? I did?" Shane huffs, throwing both hands up in mild exasperation. "They're—I gave them two weeks off for—for obvious reasons. It's the holiday season, *and* I don't have anything important going on. Why?"

*'Why, he asks.*

Ilya closes his eyes. Opens them. Then closes them again.

*This is going to be a long day.*

“Two weeks off, huh?” Ilya sighs, nursing his cup of hot chocolate. “Of course you did.”

Shane raises an eyebrow. “What? You don’t like it?”

The outfit in question... well.

Ilya glances at the baby blue wide-leg slacks that Shane somehow deemed appropriate for the occasion and frowns visibly, grunting with a shake of his head. He lifts his gaze to the white dress shirt that’s been buttoned all the way to the top, the crocheted, dark grey scarf around his neck and the beige blazer that, arguably, fits him well—but that’s about it.

The colour of the material leaves much to be desired.

As does everything else.

“Ah, don’t worry, Shane,” is what Ilya settles on. “It is endearing, rather than. Stylish. Or interesting.”

Shane appears to be mildly horrified. “Endearing.”

“Yes, endearing,” Ilya affirms, leaning to the side to place his cup on the surface of the end table. “You look like a twelve-year-old going to a uh—a school dance or something. Trying to impress friends and all that. Or perhaps... trying to impress a *crush*. So, yes—I think it’s endearing.”

Shane frowns. “Rozanov.”

“*Ilya*,” he corrects him firmly, knowing full well that Shane has a tendency of calling him by his last name when he has decided that he’s annoyed with him. Ilya swallows around the lump in his throat, watching as Shane swiftly swaps his horrid fashion choices with his sponsored Lululemon set that does very little to combat the harsh wintry chill on the outside. “Where are you going?”

“Where do you think?” Shane snaps, grabbing his wallet on the countertop. “I’m going to the mall.”

“The *mall*?” Ilya asks, puzzled. He takes a step closer and shoves both hands in the pockets of his joggers. “It is colder than Grandfather Frost’s ass crack outside. *Why* are you going to the mall?”

Shane slowly turns to look at him.

“What do you mean by why? You just insulted the clothes I was planning on wearing to dinner with my parents tomorrow,” Shane speaks through gritted teeth, gesturing to the clothes that have been tossed carelessly on the cushion of the sectional. He couldn’t even be bothered to fold them—that’s how Ilya *knows* he’s pissed off. “I need something else to wear, obviously.”

The room falls silent.

Shane looks at the crumpled mess he left behind and sighs audibly. “Ugh, I can’t leave them like this.”

Never mind.

Maybe he’s not *that* irritated—which is, undoubtedly, very good news for Ilya Rozanov.

“Hm, that I did. But we are at,” Ilya tries to find the right words as Shane reaches for two wooden hangers to put his clothes on. “You know... this cottage. Very far drive, no? On snowy roads, too—I do not like the idea.”

Shane disappears into their shared bedroom for a moment to place his clothes back into his closet.

Very neat.

Very Shane.

“Honestly, I don’t mind driving back in town,” Shane says, gesturing vaguely, “for this.”

And, well—Ilya sort of believes him, sort of doesn’t. What’s more is that he doesn’t miss the deadpan expression on Shane’s face. The knot of mild annoyance that sits between both of his eyebrows calls to the fact that he seriously can’t believe Ilya would haughtily raise torches and pitchforks against his dreary sense of fashion.

“Come on, don’t give me that look,” Ilya presses, placing a gentle hand on Shane’s shoulder. The side of his thumb digs just below his collarbone—where it’s sensitive. Shane relaxes instinctively. Leans into it. “Are you *that* upset?”

At the question, Shane’s frown deepens. Naturally. “You said I looked like a twelve-year-old!”

Perhaps, now that Ilya's looking back on the past five minutes, those weren't his best choice of words.

But, hey—he was being honest.

*That's what truly matters, right?*

Honesty? The best policy? All that jazz?

He sure fucking hopes so.

“I also said it was endearing, did I not?” Ilya does what he can to salvage this mess. He notes that his thumb has succeeded in making Shane less tense, thank god. Ilya pulls his precious bottom baby into his loving embrace for good measure. Feels Shane *melt* against his chest. *Poor thing*. What is Ilya to do with him? “What are you so worked up about, Hollander?”

“*Shane!*”

Ah.

A slip of the tongue.

Ilya feels the tenseness of Shane's muscles against the underside of his forearms, feels the palm that lightly shoves at his chest and realises, in horror, that he has lost him once again.

Now, my dear readers: please forgive him—Ilya Rozanov didn't exactly attend Dom Top University, let alone graduate Cum Laude, so he is learning what he can as he goes along. Then again, experience is the best teacher, after all.

"Ah, yes," Ilya clicks his tongue and belatedly makes a mental note to never make that mistake again. Only Shane can call him by his last name, but—stay with me now—that's only when Shane is annoyed with him, which is like totally fine. Something, something, happy wife, happy life. Happy *husband*— "*Shane*, my bad."

Shane closes his eyes for a moment to gather his thoughts, and Ilya is sure to give him the silence he needs. "God forbid I want the man I'm in love with to think I'm hot and sexy."

"I *do* think you are hot and sexy. Usually," Ilya pulls his bottom lip between his teeth. Briefly considers what to say next before shrugging visibly and leaning in just enough to press a sweet kiss to Shane's flushed cheek.

It turns out to be the right call, thankfully, because Ilya immediately feels the *shift*—the tension itself leaving Shane's body as he's pulled in again, and Ilya nearly sighs in relief. Riding the momentum, he moves enough to press his nose to the crown of Shane's head. Inhales the faint scent of Shane's shampoo until his knees buckle. Ilya's voice is muffled when he says, "Just not in *those* clothes."

"Whatever," Shane laughs, a light and airy sound, a ray of light, of warmth scattered across the clouds, something saccharine spreading across his tongue, his mouth watering from the sweetness of it. Truthfully, Ilya can never get used to it, to *this*, really—to the way his heart skips a beat when Shane's eyes crinkle in the corners as he smiles, to the way his hands quiver with the need to hold him closer.

Ilya nearly huffs in disbelief.

*Love* is an interesting thing.

Shane drags the pad of his index finger against Ilya's sternum, just shy of where his lover's heart hammers pathetically against his ribcage. "Go do me a favour and warm up the car."

"Well, since you seem to be... set on the idea, I suppose we should be grateful it didn't snow earlier. Toss me the keys," Ilya says, catching the keys to Shane's Range Rover with ease. Sue him, but he's not *particularly* thrilled to be leaving the comforting warmth of the cottage to embrace the daily horrors in negative-fifteen-degree weather. "Don't forget to bring some snacks for the road, Shane. As you know, we both get very fussy when we're hungry."



It started as Shane's idea. Sure was.

It was *Shane's* idea to incorporate more... Russian traditions into their holiday season this year—their first holiday season together as a full-blown couple.

The festive evergreen in Shane's cottage is decorated with notable figures in Russian culture, such as the ever-generous Grandfather Frost and his granddaughter, alongside gorgeous yellow lights and glass ball ornaments. At the top of the spruce tree lies a rather wholesome picture of Ilya and Shane holding a glowing star together, with Shane smiling gleefully as Ilya plants an open-mouthed kiss on his cheek.

And below the tree?

Below the lovely spruce tree are gifts, as one can imagine. Some of these gifts are humble, whereas most of them are lavish, borderline outlandish, all with Shane Hollander's name written on them—gifts that have been delivered the week prior by Grandfather Frost himself, who happens to be Ilya Rozanov donned in blue and white garments, with a fake, white moustache glued above his top lip.

The ride into town is chaotic for the most part, with Shane happily singing along to the Christmas songs playing on the radio, and Ilya clapping along to the beat of every song that's vaguely familiar to him. Days ago, Christmas was spent the same way, but at *Hayden's* house, where they had been invited to join in the festivities with him, his wife and his bundles of joy.

Ilya looks out the window as he tightens his hold on Shane's hand.

It was nice.

*This* is nice.

It's far better than he could've ever imagined it to be.

The Rozanovs, as Ilya affectionately likes to call them, have promised to spend time with Shane's parents on New Year's Eve—to bring in the new year with this new, precious family that Ilya now has the privilege of calling his own. There are plans to indulge in an observatory wine-pairing dinner, to join in the neighbouring 'counting down to the new year' festivities, to watch the fireworks and to listen to a live jazz band afterwards.

A night full of fun.

And Shane intended to dress like a fashion disaster before Ilya had no choice but intervene.

*The nerve of him.*

But what's worse is the *state* of Bayshore Shopping Centre, mere days after Christmas has already packed its bags and fucked off the calendar.

“This is a fucking nightmare, man. What the fuck,” Ilya nearly hollers, clutching at his own hair in exasperation as he’s surrounded by bodies—swarms of bodies moving through the hallways and past the kiosks. “The entire country of Canada is in this mall right now, even though they should be spending time at home with their families. It’s like... looking at a pack of sardines.”

Shane turns to look at him, an amused smile tugging at his lips. “Sardines?”

“Yes,” Ilya says, opting to keep himself as close to Shane as possible without getting any suspicious glances from any onlookers. “It is um... close together. *Compact*, as you English-speakers call it. And it, unfortunately, smells like shit, and I’m certain it’s because of *that* white man’s body odour.” “It’s too much. I might break into a sweat.”

“Please, don’t. No sweating,” Shane chuckles, grinning at the feeling of Ilya’s hand on his wrist. “This is supposed to be a quick and peaceful experience. You know, despite the millions of people crushing us... like we’re sardines in a can. Good analogy, by the way.”

Ilya perks up then, his eyes narrowing. “Anal?”

“*Analogy*.”

“I’m too lazy to look that up. I will pretend you said ‘anal’ instead.”

“You’re fucking impossible.”

“Mm, but Hollander,” Ilya whines, because this is allowed. They’re outside, amongst the general public—’*Shane*’ might be a little too intimate. That is: until they forget all about keeping up appearances in the first place. “I’m no good at crowds. I need your body to stop me from, oh, I don’t know, having a panic attack?”

Shane shoots him a glare, but there’s no bite behind it. “Behave, Rozanov.”

Ilya looks at him, aghast. “Me? I must behave? Why don’t you?”

“I’m always behaving!”

“Lies. You are quite the liar, Hollander,” Ilya insists, lightly shoving at his shoulder. “You claim you’re always behaving, yet you won’t let me have your way with you in a bathroom stall that might infect us both with pink eye from the moment we step inside.”

“Which is, like, a pretty damn *normal* reaction to have?” Shane giggles as they walk into a store that sells men’s formalwear. “Hello?”

“Hi. And, *yeah*, if you are a *prude*, I’m sure,” Ilya sighs, shrugging. “The pink eye adds to the fun. Allegedly. Heard it from a gruff-looking old guy back in Russia.”

Luckily, and to Ilya's surprise, it doesn't take long to find some decent articles of clothing that suit the upcoming occasion perfectly.

In the fitting room, Shane offers him nothing more than a shy smile and a set of warm, honeyed yet nervous-looking eyes. Ilya can only stand there and ruminate on how fucking precious he is. "How—how does this look?"

Ilya reaches out to touch the lapel of the fitted, black, pinstripe blazer and hums appreciatively. His gaze shifts to the turtleneck that hides the hickey he had left near his jugular the night before, falls to the straight leg slacks that hug his muscled thighs just right.

It's perfect.

Classy and elevated, while still being Very Shane Hollander.

"Yes," he praises softly, and decides that he'll assist Shane with the comb-over that will set the entire look off when the time comes. "I'm satisfied with this outfit. You look nice."

Shane, who shamelessly siphons praise as he needs it to survive, is going to need a little more than that.

He nudges at Ilya's chest and frowns. "Hot and sexy?"

Ilya nods dutifully, a smile tugging at his lips. "Hot and sexy."

"...How hot and sexy?"

"*Very* hot and *very* sexy."

*Hm.*

*That's good, Shane supposes, but it's not enough.*

Shane wants more—wants so much more. Wants so much praise and affection. Wants to fucking drown in it, so he shuffles on his feet and asks, "You'd fuck me in these?"

"Yes, you look so incredibly fuckable in your pinstripe blazer, Shane," Ilya says, licking his lips as he reaches out to place both hands on Shane's shoulders. He takes a deep breath to ground himself before he speaks again, "I'm feeling hot and ready like a box of pizza from Little Caesars. Now, the cash register."

About fifteen minutes later, Ilya is holding Shane's bags of clothes as they manoeuvre past the endless swarm of bodies making their way through the hallways of the mall.

"I see I have replaced your stylist," Ilya says.

Shane shrugs before shoving his hands in his pockets. "For the two weeks or so."

Ilya gives him a sidelong glance. “And how am I being paid for all my efforts?”

Shane pretends to take a moment to give it some thought. “How about something delicious to eat from the food court?”

“Like your hole on a silver platter?”

“Uh,” Shane wrinkles his nose and shakes his head. “I was thinking something more along the lines of burgers or pasta? Maybe some Chinese food, if they have?”

“Ugh, boring,” Ilya says with a roll of his eyes. “But that’ll do, I guess.”



After stuffing themselves full of a hearty meal from the food court, they’re about to move towards the exit when Shane sees someone dressed in Santa Claus attire, seated near the huge Christmas tree on the first floor.

“Christmas was days ago, but they still have Santa here taking pictures?” Shane asks, scratching the nape of his neck as he watches a few ladies flock to his side to take photographs. “I don’t really get that one. It looks like the kids don’t really seem to care about it anymore—which is... understandable. They’ve already got their gifts, so it’s mostly adults who are humouring him now.”

Strange.

If Christmas is over, then why is he still here?

What is he after? Or who?

Ilya narrows his eyes for a moment, looking at Santa warily.

Honestly, he doesn’t know much about Santa Claus—all he knows is the appearance, and perhaps the motive, of Santa Claus can be seen as somewhat similar to Grandfather Frost in Russian culture.

“It seems as if Santa and his minions are trying to milk the holiday spirit out of anyone who will let them,” Ilya comments, “from their little teats.”

*From their—*

*What.*

Shane sighs in exasperation. “Please don’t say teats.”

Ilya frowns a little at that. “Should I say tits instead?”

*“Ilya.”*

“You know what?” Ilya swallows thickly, looking at Santa place his hand on some stranger’s shoulder as they both smile for the camera. How unnecessary. “That gloved hand is up to no good, Shane.”

“You wanna know what I’m thinking? Hell, why not?” Shane grins, guiding Ilya towards the stairs that lead to the first floor of the mall. “Wanna take pictures with Santa?”

Ilya grimaces. “I don’t know him.”

“Come *on*,” Shane urges, patting the middle of his back, urging him forward now that he’s caught a whiff of Ilya’s reluctance. “It’ll be fun! A couple of cute photos for the memories!”

By the time they have arrived at the place where Santa is seated, the man in the get-up is alone and is able to give them his undivided attention.

This... *unnerves* Ilya.

*What does this old coot want, anyway?*

“Ah, to what do I have the honour,” Santa starts, holding a gloved hand out for *Ilya’s* pretty bottom to take. “Shane Hollander?”

Ilya looks at Shane swiftly. *What the fuck is going on here?*

“W-wait. You know who I am?” Shane gasps out, all giddy and full of smiles and, fucking hell, Ilya’s stomach *sinks*. “This is the first time I’m getting recognised since coming here today.”

Santa laughs at that. Sometimes Shane forgets that he’s *the* Shane Hollander. “I’m sure others have recognised you, dear.”

Ilya takes a step forward without much thought, his expression pinched. “*Dear?*”

Santa pays Ilya no mind and continues talking. “I do believe that they’re just minding their business. You know? And doing whatever shopping is necessary now that New Year’s is about to come rushing in.”

Shane glances at the Christmas tree before giving Santa a once-over. “How come you’re still here taking pictures?”

“Since Christmas has passed, Santa has a lot more time on his hands,” Santa mumbles, shifting slightly on the cushion of his throne. “I figured I’d spend that time here, spreading a little holiday cheer to anyone who still needs it.”

“As I *said*,” Ilya hisses, looking a bit like a madman as he tries to figure out what Santa’s deal is. “Milking them from their little teats.”

“Well, if it’s not too much trouble,” Shane begins, offering his cell phone to one of Santa’s helpers who remains on standby. “Can I—can *we* get a couple of photos with you?”

“Oh, but of course,” Santa cheers happily, clasping both gloved hands together as Shane moves to sit on his left thigh. “I would be honoured to snap a photo with *the* Shane Hollander.”

Ilya, on the other hand, nearly goes into cardiac arrest.

“Shane,” Ilya blinks, his bottom lip quivering when he sees Santa’s gloved hand on Shane’s side. “Why are you—why are you sitting on his lap? And his hand—watch his hand!”

“What do you mean by ‘why’?” Shane mutters, his eyebrows furrowing in confusion. “Because he’s Santa Claus! That’s kind of what you do? You sit on his lap, tell him what you want for Christmas, flash all thirty-two teeth when you take a photo with him as a keepsake—and that’s about it.”

Santa Claus understands where Ilya’s questions are stemming from and, well—

Hey, it happens.

Santa tries to have mercy on him, though—or so it would seem. Ilya thinks he sees right through him. “Ilya Rozanov.”

“What the fu—” Ilya clutches onto Shane’s bag of clothes with a strength he didn’t even know he had. “*How* do you know my name?”

There’s something that’s borderline ridiculous about two of the greatest hockey players in modern history both being surprised when they’re recognised by a random civilian during their day-to-day, but Santa refuses to harp on it too much.

Onlookers may feel the need to join in.

With that being said, the unknown in the Santa Claus get-up has a part to play. It’s what he gets *paid* to do, after all.

*Act.*

*Pretend.*

“How? Well, it’s obvious, isn’t it? Because your name is on that list that I check twice!” Santa throws his head back and guffaws, beaming as if Ilya is some fucking thing to make fun of. “Ho-ho-ho!”

“Why the fuck does he have a list?” Ilya asks, seemingly uncomfortable with Santa Claus and his antics, “And why does he check the list twice? Shane, I’m not liking his—his vibe or whatever. He is weird and strange.”

After a tense moment of silence between the three, Ilya gestures to Santa’s right thigh—because, so help him, he will *also* be sitting on Santa’s lap. “Move your leg.”

“Ilya,” Shane manages, looking at him as if he’s fucking lost his mind. “What’s your deal? You’re being kind of rude for no reason.”

“Santa thinks he is so clever, but I am watching him. I am watching his every move. I, too, can check lists—the bastard,” Ilya rests the bag of clothes near the helper’s feet and balls both fists. “I do not trust him. His beard, his gloves. Written lists with names. Checking them twice? It’s all so—out of touch.”

Shane—

Shane doesn’t understand.

He doesn’t understand where any of this is coming from, actually.

“Ilya?” Shane mumbles, mostly under his breath, but Ilya is now close enough to hear him anyway. “Is this some kind of joke? Why the hell are you freaking out right now?”

“Santa *wants* you, Shane,” Ilya says, as if it’s the most natural thing in the damn world. Shane’s vision is blurring near the edges—because what the *fuck* is happening right now? “That’s why he pulled you onto his lap! For pictures? Bullshit. He’s trying to cop a feel!”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Shane huffs, blinking furiously. “Santa has a wife!”

“Well, I do not know the personal lives of the Claus family! Maybe they have an open relationship!” “Have you ever thought of that?”

With that, Ilya turns his attention to Santa, who watches the exchange with very little to add to it—no explanation, no clarification, no nothing.

Ilya drives a finger into his chest. “Santa.”

Santa cocks his head to the side, confused. “Yes, Ilya?”

Ilya narrows his gaze. “Are you cheating on your wife?”

“Ho-ho! What a loaded question,” Santa laughs, wiping a tear from his eye at the mere ridiculousness of the situation. “Cheating? No, of course not. But we do believe in polyamory.”

Ilya slowly turns to look at Shane.

“*Poly*—see, this is the same bullshit I’m talking about, Shane!” Ilya throws his hands up in exasperation. “He does not care about the feelings of his wife! He is trying to woo you, and I won’t stand for it.”

“Santa,” Ilya speaks through gritted teeth. “I need you to be honest with me. You want him, don’t you?”

Santa looks at Shane.

Shane looks at Santa, horrified.

Ilya looks at Santa, expectantly. With both hands on his hips, attitude *dripping* from his body language.

And, naturally, Santa decides to add fuel to the fire by giving Shane a once-over.

“H-him?” Santa mumbles, unsure of how to answer such a question, “Uh, Shane Hollander is a very lovely man, but—”

“I’m done,” Ilya spits.

“Oh, come *on*. Ilya? At least let him finish his sentence!” Shane grumbles, standing to his feet. “Where are you going?”

Ilya runs a few fingers through the strands of his hair, entirely frustrated by this entire ordeal. “Mr. Big Shot *Santa* here thinks he is a better man than me, but he is wrong. He is very, very wrong, and I will prove that to him.”

“On the rink. There is a rink nearby, and I know that because Shane mentioned it on the way here,” Ilya continues, pacing back and forth before stopping in his tracks and pointing at Santa Claus, who is still seated on his throne. “*You*. Grab a hockey stick. We will compete for Shane.”

“*Compete?*” Shane thinks he’s about to fucking pass out at any moment. “This guy is Santa Claus! He can’t—”

“Ho-ho! Shane here is absolutely right.”

Ilya decides that he hates that sound. He hates the sound of Santa possibly finding humour in this situation. “Ho-ho? Shane, he’s fucking mocking me.”

“He *isn’t*. That’s just his thing, and it has nothing to do with you.”

“What thing?”

“He’s just laughing!”

“So, it’s just as I thought! He’s mocking me!”

“Santa, please. No more *ho-hos*,” Shane turns to Santa and sighs, holding his head tiredly. “He’s kind of... getting the wrong idea, and this entire exchange is starting to fucking kill me a little.”

“Would you like a bit of spiked eggnog?” Santa offers the concoction in the glass that’s seated on the coffee table nearby. “It’ll help.”

This is all too much for one afternoon, honestly. Shane thinks his heart just might soon cease to function. “Spiked eggnog? *Jesus Christ*, Santa’s drinking on the job.”

Santa stares at him and shrugs. “Happens.”

“*You*,” Ilya insists. “The rink. I will not repeat myself.”

“I cannot leave my post, Mr. Rozanov,” Santa smiles apologetically. Waves his hand before he leans forward to take a big swig from his eggnog. “Not until the next six hours.”

“Fucking fine. Uh, one moment,” Ilya mutters, digging around in his pocket for a few seconds too long, before he pulls out a Canadian two-dollar coin with a self-assured smile tugging at his lips. “Santa, we will do this instead. We will flip this coin. Heads or tails?”

Well, that works.

Santa hums to himself as he gives it some thought. “Hmm, let’s go with heads for me.”

“*Let’s go with heads for me*,” Ilya mimics in disgust, snarling as he stewes in anger. “He is totally not taking me seriously.”

Shane shrugs his shoulders in defeat. “I wouldn’t either.”



Shane feels as if he’s merely a shell of who he once was now that they’re finally on the drive back to the cottage.

He doesn’t even want to ask, but he fucking has to—because what the hell was all that? “Do you finally feel relieved about this entire thing?”

“I would probably feel more relieved if I beat his ass on the rink,” Ilya grins as he looks at the tails side of the two-dollar coin, “but this will do.”

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