

the nhl awards

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by [jacemorgensterns](#)

Summary

Shane and Ilya decide to attend the NHL Awards after their first season playing together for the Ottawa Centaurs. As Ilya sneaks out for a cigarette, he comes across an old friend and catches up with him.

“You guys should have hyphenated,” Marlow commented. “Used both last names. Like Rozanov-Hollander. Or Hollander-Rozanov, if you want to go alphabetically.”

“Would have been hard to fit on a jersey,” Ilya said. “And is a mouthful.”

To his surprise, Marlow grinned. “Good point,” he said. “So how has the first year of married life been treating you?”

Notes

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

Regardless of what Roger Crowell, the commissioner of the NHL, thought about them, Shane and Ilya were two very good players. Regardless of what perhaps most of the organisation of the NHL thought about them (Ilya could only speculate, realistically, but considering they didn't like the Centaurs' coach Brandon Wiebe either, Ilya could sense a pattern), they couldn't get around Shane and Ilya. They couldn't get around the organisation of the Ottawa Centaurs as a whole, because they made it to the semi-finals of the playoffs before losing, yet again, to the New York Admirals.

What that meant was that Wiebe, Hazy, Dykstra, Chouinard, Barrett, Shane and Ilya were *all* invited to attend the NHL Awards. A few of them had attended the All-Stars weekend a couple of months ago, but Ilya guessed that no one but the team itself expected that Ottawa would do as well as they had.

Scott Hunter also said he expected Ottawa to take the Stanley Cup home to Canada between now and five years, when Shane and Ilya visited The Kingfisher with Troy after an away game against the Admirals during the season. So maybe it wasn't just the Centaurs believing in the Centaurs, Maybe it was some parts of the NHL being a bit slow to catch up. Maybe they were practising wishful thinking in hoping that the Centaurs wouldn't do well despite having a few of the best players of the league in their team.

Realistically, the likes of Barrett and Hazy spoke for themselves, never mind Shane and Ilya. Ilya also felt that their defense never got enough credit and especially Chouinard and Dykstra were heavily overlooked. They were a good team.

The NHL Awards invitation after the great run they had was absolutely inevitable. One of their rookies was nominated for Rookie of the Year, too. They should be celebrating.

Instead, when Wiebe announced they got the call-up for the NHL Awards, Ilya asked what he thought Shane might be thinking too: "Is it mandatory?"

"No," Wiebe said, eyeing him. "It's up to you whether or not you want to go. It would look better for the organisation if you go, but I want you to do what is right for you."

He didn't specify whether it would look better for the NHL or for the Centaurs. Probably both, Ilya reckoned. He cared a lot about the Centaurs. He didn't care enough about the NHL considering they were still the reason he could play ice hockey and could live in Canada.

Formerly, Ilya loved the NHL Awards. Not the ceremony in itself, of course, unless he was winning an award that he could gloat about. No, he loved the afterparty. He loved catching up with the players that he antagonised on the ice. Maybe he would poke at them a bit more, but it was also an opportunity to look beyond hockey for once. He loved the opportunity to be in a group of people who had a collective understanding of being good at hockey in some shape or form despite playing for a lot of different teams. Much like the All-Star Game, it was a way to catch up with old teammates once more and see how they were doing.

These days Ilya wasn't so enthused about the NHL Awards or the afterparty. He knew Shane felt the same way or probably even worse about it. Shane had definitely gotten the worst of

the backlash after the truth about their relationship came out, with Montreal responding the way they did. Ilya knew that not the entire NHL felt that way, something that had been made clear to him throughout the season. He also knew that Scott Hunter and his new initiative was making waves. But there was still a part of the NHL that didn't think that Shane and Ilya, or Troy or Scott, should be invited to the NHL Awards at all.

It made Ilya want to stay home and not acknowledge it at all. It also made Ilya want to go to the Awards and rock the boat.

In the end, he decided to leave it in the hands of a man who wouldn't want to go just to rock the boat. Shane would have a far more reasonable opinion than Ilya would have.

He brought up the matter over dinner that evening. They'd just talked at length about that day's practice. Ilya had never considered prior to Shane signing for the Centaurs how much the Centaurs would take over his life. Ilya saw hockey as his job, not his life, but Shane was far more intense about it than he was. It was one of the many things he loved about Shane, though, so he was more than happy to indulge it often.

"So the NHL Awards," Ilya said in between two bites of his food as though to fill a silence when one had at last fallen. "Could be fun."

Shane pulled a face as though it was his newest variant of a nightmare instead of, as Ilya put it, fun. "It could be fun," he agreed tentatively, though unconvincingly by the way he dropped his fork in his vegetables. "Do you want to go?"

"Should we go in support of our team?" Ilya asked. "Maybe Hayden will be there." Oh, who was he kidding? He tried again. "Scott will be there." That was an argument that Shane tended to be more sensitive to.

Joking though Ilya might always be about Scott Hunter and him being way too old to play hockey, he always had a certain amount of respect and admiration for the man. Scott Hunter had changed the game for him. He had changed his life in many ways. Scott had also been more of a presence in their lives the past year, something that started at their training camp in Montreal. They kept in touch and made time to see each other when the Admirals played the Centaurs, if their schedules allowed it. Scott also recommended their honeymoon location to them, of course.

Shane seemingly considered that. "It would be nice to see some guys again, including Scott," he conceded. "And we were invited, so..." He trailed off.

Ilya didn't need him to explain why he was so hesitant, since he thought he felt the exact same way. The NHL had invited them, but had they done that because they couldn't get around Shane and Ilya, or because they genuinely wanted them there?

Maybe strength in numbers was the way to go. "I can ask if Barrett is going?" Ilya offered. "He will definitely bring Harris. They are always together."

"They are inseparable," Shane agreed, filling in the word that Ilya had been looking for but had not landed on yet. He seemed to warm a little to the idea. "Maybe if we all go together it could be fun."

Ilya didn't want to feel like he had to talk Shane into going, especially because he wasn't sure if he wanted to go. "It could also be horrible," he therefore said. "I don't know, Shane. Maybe I want to stay in bed with you all day and make you come three times while Scott and Troy talk about how much they miss having us there at the NHL Awards."

Shane laughed a little, seeming more relaxed, and picked his fork back up. "Two good options," he said. "I'll think about it."

That was all Ilya asked, realistically.

They were going to the NHL Awards. In the end, they mutually decided it was better to go than not to go. They wanted to know how people felt about the Centaurs and how people acted around them. Shane called it 'knowledge is power'. Ilya called it 'I can tell people to fuck off to their face'. Shane asked him to please behave. Ilya was going to try his best. For Shane and for Ottawa.

What really helped was that their team decided to go together, flew there together and went to the same hotel together. It had taken Shane a little bit to get used to being a Centaur, but now that they made it through an entire season and a post-season together Shane had definitely found his place in the group. Shane being friends with Hazy was a given (everyone decent could be friends with Wyatt Hayes), but Shane had also warmed up to Troy and got along with Dykstra very well.

Shane had also expressed to Ilya on multiple occasions that the atmosphere in the Centaurs' locker room was very different from the atmosphere in the Montreal locker room. Ilya didn't tell him that this fact didn't surprise him; he had, instead, told Shane how glad he was he'd joined Ilya's team, now their team, and how happy the rest of their team was to have him around.

On the red carpet before the event, Ilya gave the photographers approximately fifteen seconds to take shots from the two of them separately before Ilya went over to his husband to pose with him. He wasn't going to give anyone the opportunity to get the wrong idea. Shane deserved to be celebrated for his individual accomplishments, and Shane would say the same about him, but Ilya wanted there to be no doubt whatsoever about their relationship.

He did make sure to wait to whisper in Shane's ear how hot he looked until they were inside. He did promise Shane he would behave, after all.

Shane scolded him for it anyway, his cheeks turning red, and Ilya grinned and hardly refrained from kissing him. He would do that in their shared hotel room later.

The ceremony itself was a predictable bore. The Admirals had lost the final to another boring team, and as a result most of the individual prizes went to members of that team. Ilya tried to look mostly neutral, not a hard feat for him, as he clapped for whatever boring person won the next prize. Beside him Troy was providing entertainment by sometimes saying what Ilya was also thinking, though Harris was of course relentlessly positive about it all. On Ilya's other side Shane was tense and uncomfortable, but Ilya was proud of him for being here and attending the ceremony.

During the ceremony, Ilya took the time to reevaluate his favorite versions of Shane Hollander. He maintained he liked him best in either hockey gear or naked in their bed, but there was something to be said for formal wear. Shane looked really good. Of course, Shane always looked good to Ilya, but there was something classic about a suit jacket and a tie that Ilya couldn't shake.

Admittedly, the both of them would also be very happy for Ilya to take that tie off of Shane after this ceremony.

The moment the ceremony was over, Ilya turned to Troy and loudly said: "Are you ready for actual party? We deserve a drink after this."

Troy side-eyed him. "Do you actually think the alcohol here is up to your standard?" he asked, by now well-informed of Ilya's slight disdain of any alcohol that wasn't Russian vodka. He would drink it, but he might complain about it.

"Probably not," Ilya conceded without a problem. "But it will have to do." He reached out for Shane's hand. "Do you want a drink?"

"Maybe a ginger ale," Shane said contemplatively.

Ilya wanted to kiss him. Badly. "We'll go find you a ginger ale immediately. Most important course of action now."

He got the four of them through the crowd and towards the bar, where he immediately ordered their three go-to-drinks, something he was very much used to by now. Both Shane and Harris weren't necessarily big drinkers. Troy had a beer.

As they were waiting for their drinks, Scott Hunter showed up with Kip in tow. Ilya was half-convinced he had been looking for them. Scott still didn't quite seem to know what to do with Ilya, understandably, but he still seemed to like him. He very much got along with Shane (which made complete sense to Ilya as well, the two of them were similar in some ways) and he seemingly got closer to Troy as well.

Ilya had once or twice joked about Scott being the only out of the closet active hockey player that didn't play for the Centaurs, though he could imagine Scott would have liked players on his team that understood him in that way too. Ilya guessed that Scott had Eric Bennett, the former Admirals goalie who was with Kip's friend Kyle, but it wasn't the same.

“Hunter,” Ilya greeted him with a friendly half-hug that seemed to take Scott by surprise. He greeted Kip much the same way. “Here for the drinks as well, after the - what is the term?”

“Shitshow,” Troy offered, not mincing his words, as he greeted Hunter with a similar half-hug as well. “Hi, Scott.”

Well, Troy said it. “Ceremony,” Ilya said with a smirk. “Drinks after the ceremony, of course.”

“Of course,” Scott agreed, unfazed, before moving onto Shane and Harris.

At that point their drinks arrived. Ilya passed them around and ordered two more for Scott and Kip before turning back to Shane. Shane was talking to Kip, ginger ale in hand, and seemed far more relaxed in company that he knew and knew wasn’t going to comment on him being here. Shane was good now.

He leaned in towards Shane. “I’m going outside,” he said. “Be right back.”

Shane knew exactly what Ilya was going to do, but he didn’t comment. Just for that, Ilya pressed a kiss to his cheek and let his hand linger on Shane’s back for a moment before letting go. He looked over at Scott, trying to communicate with a single glance that he wanted Scott to keep an eye on anyone coming near Shane. By the way that Scott nodded, Ilya thought he actually seemed to understand.

Ilya managed to push through the crowd again. He disappeared through the front door of the venue and found a wall mostly out of sight from everyone. He fished his pack of cigarettes out of his pocket and lit one. After a look around, he leaned against a wall and put the cigarette between his lips.

Next year was the year he might quit. Maybe. If the year was less stressful.

So probably not.

After a drag or three, when the effects of the cigarette had already started to calm him down, he was joined by a man that used to see him do this and never told on him. In hindsight Ilya suspected there weren’t enough breath mints and perfume sprays in the world to mask the scent of cigarettes. The Boston management definitely knew or at least suspected that he had still been smoking. The management of the Centaurs cared a lot less about his smoking habits, thankfully.

“Roz,” Cliff Marlow greeted him, extending his hand for Ilya to take.

Ilya greeted him with the usual half-handshake half-hug that became customary, holding his cigarette in his free hand. “Marley.”

Marlow patted him on the back before letting him go and standing next to him. “Is it Roz? Or did you change your last name to Hollander when you married Hollander?”

Ilya turned to look at him to check if he was making fun of Ilya, but he seemed to be dead serious. “No. I kept my own last name. Shane did too.”

In all honesty, Ilya had considered changing it, but had ultimately decided against it. He didn’t need the name to feel like he was a part of the family. It would be odd to call himself ‘Hollander’ after all the years of calling Shane ‘Hollander’. It also admittedly would be odd to see himself with such a last name while he still had an obvious Russian accent that he probably wouldn’t be able to get rid of.

His last name might be his father’s, but what mattered to Ilya far more was that he didn’t use his second name (which was also his father’s) anymore. His mother had the last name too, after all. ‘Rozanov’ had been what he was known by in the league since he was nineteen years old. It was better to stick to it.

“You guys should have hyphenated,” Marlow commented.

“Hyphe-what?” Ilya asked, frowning.

“Hyphenated,” Marlow repeated. “Used both last names. Like Rozanov-Hollander. Or Hollander-Rozanov, if you want to go alphabetically.”

The patient explanation with immediate examples gave Ilya flashbacks of their time at Boston. Marlow was always ready, without fail, to explain words or phrases to Ilya, and never once made fun of him for not understanding English. It had been oddly comforting to Ilya at the time and it was still nice now.

“Would have been hard to fit on a jersey,” Ilya said. “And is a mouthful.”

To his surprise, Marlow grinned. “Good point,” he said. “So how has the first year of married life been treating you?”

It was a surprisingly normal question from a man who undoubtedly followed Ilya outside to ask very different questions. “Good,” Ilya said. “It has been good.”

It had been incredible, actually. After all the years of being apart from Shane, not seeing him for weeks on end and having to steal time away to spend together, it felt like a luxury to see him most of the time. The way they had to come out was less than ideal, but the world knowing they were together made it a lot easier to be together. No one bat an eye at it anymore. The resistance they were met with was something they dealt with together.

“I’m glad to hear it,” Marlow said with a friendly pat on his back. “You seem... Different.” Different how? Ilya never got an opportunity to ask, because Marlow continued: “I know you don’t actually owe me any answers, Roz, but how long have you and Hollander actually been together?”

“Why?” Ilya asked. “Why do you want to know?”

“I want to know how much of an ass I made of myself throughout the years,” Marlow admitted, pulling a face at himself. “You were one of my best friends for years and I don’t

think I ever noticed anything. Hollander was your rival and that was how you behaved. That was how all of us behaved. We just followed your lead in disliking him and that was all we knew.”

Ilya never got into the beginnings of their relationship much. When someone asked, which wasn't often, he always stayed vague. Shane and he both seemed to have settled on indicating the starting point of their relationship after Shane dated Rose Landry, though their connection happened years before that.

“We were together when I was still playing for Boston,” Ilya said, deciding to give Marlow that much. “So for a while.”

Marlow seemingly considered that. “Did you ever think of telling me?”

Just once, but Ilya wasn't sure if he should tell Marlow that. They had been good friends back when they both played for Boston. Best friends, maybe. But Ilya had never considered telling Marlow about him - that he was into men as well as women - never mind about Shane. He knew he could never feel safe doing that and that had nothing to do with Cliff Marlow.

“What does it matter, Marlow?” Ilya asked with a sigh and a subsequent drag of his cigarette.

“I guess it doesn't matter,” Marlow conceded.

Ilya looked over at him. He had never put much thought into how anyone at Boston might be reacting to the news that Shane and Ilya were together. Most of the fans hated him for leaving, which was fine. Most of the players understood that was how life in ice hockey worked. Some other players, like Ryan Price before he retired, were transferred seemingly every year. Ilya guessed he assumed they would just continue to dislike him for going to Ottawa and that his relationship with Shane wouldn't change anything there. But maybe it did, at least for Marlow.

“How did they respond? In Boston?” Ilya asked.

“The players and management were shocked,” Marlow replied. “No one had an inkling of anything going on between you and Hollander. There were some disrespectful comments, but the captains and management shut that down fast.” Then, after a short pause, “No one ever thought you let Hollander win. We all know you didn't. If anything you were more focused on winning against Montreal.”

Ilya knew why Marlow felt the need to tell him that and he appreciated it. “This is true,” he said with a nod. “I needed to win from Shane so I could rub it in his face before fucking him.”

Ilya looked aside to gauge Marlow's reaction to that statement. Marlow seemingly took a few seconds to let it register and sink in before breaking out into a laugh. “Is that what you guys did? Play hockey against each other and fuck afterwards?”

Marlow didn't sound awkward or uncomfortable. He sounded amused. Ilya decided he would trust Marlow for now.

“Yes,” Ilya said. “Was a great arrangement. Now we play hockey on the same team and fuck. Still a great arrangement.”

“So every time we played in Montreal and every time the Voyageurs came to Boston the two of you were together afterwards?”

“Yes. Most of the time.”

Marlow shook his head a little, as if in disbelief. “And no one ever noticed,” he said.

Ilya took one last drag of his cigarette, finishing it. He turned to Marlow then, studying him up and down. “Do you want me to introduce you to my husband Shane?” he asked, grinning a little.

“I would like that, actually,” Marlow said, grinning as well. “But before we go back in, there’s something else I’ve been meaning to bring up.”

Ilya wondered what Marlow could possibly have to say to him. Now that he knew they were on solid ground, though, he did know exactly what to say. “You are going to confess your love to me now?”

Much to Ilya’s delight, Marlow shoved him lightly. “Fuck off, Roz. You marry the best hockey player and you think the rest of them want to fuck you too?”

“The best hockey player!?” Ilya lightly protested, shoving him right back, though he agreed. He obviously couldn’t let that one go without some pushback.

Marlow side-eyed him. “I was going to ask you if you wanted to come to my wedding, Rozanov. Bring your husband.”

“Wait, you’re getting married?”

“Yes, is that so shocking?”

“Yes.”

Marlow laughed and shook his head. “I’m taking it back,” he said. “Don’t come to my wedding. I’ll just invite Hollander, alright.”

Normal banter between two hockey players aside, Ilya was actually touched that Marlow went out of his way to invite Ilya to his wedding. They had hardly talked for years. Marlow had reached out to him in support after the truth about Ilya and Shane’s relationship came out, but neither one of them followed up on it. Ilya guessed this was the follow up, then.

Ilya always tried to keep the relationship he had with his teammates as shallow as he could. They were colleagues that sometimes went out together. There wasn’t a point in getting attached. There were a lot of assholes in the NHL. It was a habit that Ilya didn’t take with him to the Centaurs, though he blamed the Centaurs for that. Maybe Marlow had valued their friendship when they both played for Boston more than Ilya realised.

“No, Marley, I will come to your wedding,” Ilya said seriously. “And I will take Shane. Congratulations.”

“Thank you,” Marlow said with a smile.

Ilya leaned in to him for another half-handshake half-hug that seemed appropriate for the moment. When he let go, Marlow was still grinning.

“Let’s go back inside,” Ilya said. “I will tell Shane you are a friend of ours, yes?”

Marlow nodded, then froze next to Ilya. Ilya turned back to look at him, eyebrows frowning. “Marlow? What is wrong?”

“Do you remember -” Marlow started and then stopped, seemingly scowling at himself. “Of course you remember. The hit on Hollander. You were so weird afterwards. I assumed you were so weird because he was your rival and you’d known each other for years. But the reason you were so weird was because you were in a relationship with Hollander.”

Yes, Ilya remembered that. Marlow asked him earlier if there had ever been a point when Ilya thought of telling him. That was the only time. He’d been burning with it and he was desperate to tell someone just so they’d understand even a little bit why he was so restless and uncomfortable. Marlow, as Ilya’s best friend, was the obvious option. He was also the closest to the situation, as the person who made the hit.

“Yes, that was why,” Ilya confirmed. “They wouldn’t tell me anything. They wouldn’t allow me to go to the hospital until the next morning.”

Once in the hospital Ilya only got to see Shane for five minutes, high out of his mind on all the drugs they’d given him and yet coherent enough to remind Ilya of his suggestion to spend the summer with him, instead of in Russia.

“And you still didn’t tell anyone,” Marlow observed.

Ilya shook his head. “And no one realised,” he added.

“Some things make so much sense in hindsight,” Marlow said with a sigh. “I wish you told me, Roz, but I also understand why you didn’t.”

With that, he slung his arms over Ilya’s shoulder as they continued their walk back inside. “I also hear you’ve been making friends with Crowell.”

Ilya scoffed. “Do not get me started, Marlow.”

Marlow just laughed.

When they arrived back inside, Ilya found Shane still with Scott, Kip, Troy and Harris. He stole Harris’ spot next to Shane and kissed him on the cheek in greeting. “Shane, do you

know Cliff Marlow?”

Shane frowned at him. “Yes, of course I know Cliff Marlow, Ilya,” he said. Then he looked away from Ilya and actually saw Marlow. “Oh, hi Marlow,” he said with his typical hockey player friendly undertone that made Ilya want to laugh.

Ilya snuck an arm around his waist. “We are going to his wedding, Hollander,” he told his husband. “Will be our first wedding as a couple. The first wedding that is not our own wedding. Unless -” he glanced aside at Troy. “Barrett. Do you and Drover have wedding plans?”

“Not for the summer,” Troy replied, clearly long-used to queries like that from Ilya.

Ilya nodded. “So it’s settled,” he said.

As Shane and the others congratulated Marlow, Ilya stole Shane’s ginger ale for a sip and watched them interact. He guessed it was a good thing they went to the NHL Awards after all.

End Notes

i feel like this is me setting myself up to write a fic where ilya tells cliff about him and shane the evening of the boston vs montreal game. what do you think?

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