

without changing a part of me

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76708056) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76708056>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , cameos from Scott/Kip and Troy/Harris
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander , Hayden Pike , Wyatt Hayes , Zane Boodram , Troy Barrett , Harris Drover , Scott Hunter (Game Changers) , Carter Vaughn
Additional Tags:	Fluff and Angst , Character Study , Internalized Homophobia , 5 Times , POV Shane Hollander , Light Dom/sub , Sharing Clothes , Shane Hollander is a clothes stealer CONFIRMED , Shane Hollander Speaks Russian
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-31 Words: 8,089 Chapters: 1/1

without changing a part of me

by [gurlsrool](#)

Summary

"We could have some fun tonight. You, wearing my clothes..."

"Shut up," Shane says, annoyed by the thrill the words send through him. Life would be so much easier if he wasn't wrapped around Ilya Rozanov's finger—or fingers is probably more accurate.

Or: 5 times Shane didn't plan on stealing Ilya's clothes, +1 time he absolutely did

Notes

Mom said it's my turn to write Shane Hollander's gay anxious POV

This is a fun little mix of show canon, book canon, and Rachel Reid's blog canon. It does include some Long Game spoilers.

Title from Heaven by Troye Sivan, which is still a bop if you ask me!

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

1.

The whole cab ride back to the hotel, Shane hears it.

Shane. *Shane*. His name, in Ilya's—in Rozanov's voice. Leaving his mouth like it had been held there for years, since their very first mistake.

He pulls his phone out, stares at it. The good, Canadian boy in him wants to call Rozanov right now and apologize.

The other part of him that feels more like a stray dog at a kill shelter wants to open Google and search: *am I gay if I have sex with men?* No, scratch that, that's stupid. *Am I gay if one single syllable made the world, which has always felt off kilter, right itself?*

The thing is that Shane's always felt weird about his name. The way it only pays tribute to half of him. The way it allows the commentators and the fans and even his friends to ignore that he's Japanese, to close their eyes and pretend they don't see it, see him.

Hearing Rozanov say it didn't take any of that away, obviously. It didn't shake the guilt of how much easier it is to bear the name Hollander on his back.

It just...He just...For a second, he thought that maybe...

It doesn't matter. It doesn't. Rozanov likes women and he has to too. He *does*, too. He does.

As of this moment, he'll stop. He'll stop these weird, secret rendezvous. He'll sell the condo and he'll watch girl on girl porn, so his eyes won't even be tempted to slip to the guy.

He certainly won't get himself off thinking of Rozanov. Of the hard line of his abs or the sheen of sweat on his forehead after games or the way his eyes crinkle when he laughs.

A throat clears—the cab driver's.

Shane jumps upright. He isn't sure how long they've been idling here, but he gives the guy an extra big tip in case it's been awhile.

He heads back to the room thinking about women. About soft lines and round curves and, and tits and all of it. He wants it. He knows he can want it—he does want it.

He has the good sense to knock before entering, thank God. "Uh, one second," Hayden calls out. Shane can hear the sound of high, feminine moaning on the other side of the door. Ew.

He leans against the wall and tries very hard not to be jealous of his best friend. It's ridiculous. And kind of gross.

It's just...he's not sure he can remember the last time he got off thinking about a woman. Ugh. Stupid Rozanov. Obviously this whole situation is messing with his head. That's all.

“Heeey.” Hayden opens the door a minute later, flushed. “You’re back early. Thanks for knocking.”

“Uh huh.” Shane pushes past him into the room.

“Is that—whose clothes are you wearing?”

Shane stops walking. He stops breathing.

No. After everything, this can’t be how Hayden finds out. Not now. Not when he finally found the strength to walk (okay, fine, run) away from Rozanov.

“Um.”

“Dude,” Hayden says. “Did she kick you out early *and* give you some other guy’s clothes for the road? That’s ice cold.”

Shane exhales a shaky breath. It’s both a relief and a blow that he thinks this is the most plausible option. The *only* plausible option.

“Yeah,” he says. “I spilled sauce on mine. It got everywhere. So.”

“Oh yeah, God forbid Shane Hollander has a stain on his clothes.” Hayden rolls his eyes. “What *would* the tabloids say?!”

Shane doesn’t respond. He walks the last few feet to the bed Hayden isn’t defiling and collapses.

He’s so tired, suddenly. So exhausted by the simple fact that he wishes this wasn’t the bed he was sleeping in tonight.

“Okay, I know it’s none of my business...”

“It’s not,” Shane says sharply.

“It’s not! And I don’t care,” Hayden says. Shane snorts at the obvious lie. “Just...are you okay?”

“Fine,” Shane says. Because what is he supposed to say? That he hasn’t been okay in a long time? That today he got one fleeting glimpse of what life with Rozanov could look like and it nearly killed him?

“Alright. Wanna watch the next Fast and the Furious? We’re on six, right?”

“I think so.” Shane has no idea. He was texting Rozanov all through the last one.

God, he needs to stop this. Needed to stop this years ago. Hayden puts the movie on and Shane stares at Rozanov’s contact, considers deleting his number, blocking it, writing him a ten paragraph apology, asking if he’s terrified too.

He does none of the above—and he doesn't take the clothes off either.

When he thinks too hard and the gears in his mind start stalling, he pulls the shirt up a little til the collar is above his nose. It smells like smoke and soap and sweat. Like Rozanov. Like one fragile, perfect afternoon.

He falls asleep just like that, halfway through the movie.

When he gets home, he washes the pants (because, ew), but he doesn't wash the shirt. He simply folds it and tucks it almost too high up in his closet to reach, swears he'll never touch it again.

2.

He manages to keep this promise—until after.

After Rose, after Shane comes out and Ilya comes apart, after the soothing sounds of hushed words in Russian, after the injury.

He's packing to go to his parents' house and his dad's reaching into the closet, retrieving a nonfiction book about the first Russians joining the NHL in the 80s that Shane has way too much time to read now.

In the process, his dad knocks the shirt over. "Oh, sorry." He picks it up, hands it to him. Shane's fingers tremble.

He knows it's ridiculous, but he kind of feels like his dad found his porn stash. Not that he has a porn stash—just this.

"Thanks. It's just, um, a shirt," he provides unnecessarily. Because obviously it's a shirt, what else would it be?

His dad silently goes back to digging through the closet, calling over his shoulder, "You sure the book's in here, buddy?"

"Yeah," Shane says distantly. He plops down on the bed, tracing a thumb over the fabric like it's precious. Maybe, he can give it to Ilya at the cottage. Maybe, he'll actually come. Or maybe he's being delusional. Probably. Definitely.

He just wants it so badly it's tearing him apart. Who could they be to each other without the outside world encroaching? With just a lake and loons for company, they could have this. If only for a little while longer, they could have this. Couldn't they?

They could wake up next to each other, fall asleep the same way. Their toothbrushes could share the same counter space.

God, his dreams are pathetic.

"Want me to help you change into that?" his mom asks from the doorway, startling him. She nods at the shirt.

He should say no. Tell her that his current shirt is clean enough or that he has to start learning how to change with the sling on his own. Instead, he says, “Yeah. Thanks.”

He can barely hear his dad’s rustling anymore over the sound of his own heart racing. She’s going to figure it out now. Somehow, his drugged up babbling didn’t give him away, but this will. He shouldn’t wear it. He certainly shouldn’t let her put it on him.

But he’s so tender right now, as raw as every bruise on his collarbone. He’s frustrated that he’s out for the season, that he doesn’t have hockey as an outlet, a distraction.

Frustrated that his mom has to dress him like he’s a child, frustrated that Ilya isn’t here with him, that maybe he never will be. That his toothbrush lives in solitude, until the three month mark when he dutifully replaces it with the next lonely toothbrush.

So he lets her pull the shirt on, tries not to cower when she frowns down at it. “I’ve never seen this one before.”

“A brand sent it to me. I think.” It’s a terrible excuse considering there’s no logo on it, but she nods. The injury has made her softer on him, maybe.

“A little big on you, but I like the cut.”

“Yeah.” He swallows. “I do too.”

He wishes he knew for certain how they’d react. If they’d love him less, even by ten percent. If they’d be able to look him in the eyes like this ever again.

Logically, he knows his parents are liberal. Logically, he knows they’d love him even if he grew antlers and moved to the woods to forage for the rest of his life.

That doesn’t stop his chest from tightening with the fear that maybe, *maybe*, this is different. Maybe his dad’s coworker having a ‘partner’ isn’t the same as his son having this tangled, knotted *thing* with Ilya Rozanov.

When they go to bring his bags out to the car, Shane pulls out his phone, stares down at it. He wants to call Ilya, to tell him how scared he is. That he’s worried about living with his parents, like the proximity will be enough for them to root the truth out of him.

Instead, he puts on his glasses, takes a selfie, and sends it. He doesn’t bother with a caption. With how mouthy Rozanov is, he always provides one for him.

Sure enough, he responds right away: *Is this my shirt?!*

Shane: *No, actually, it’s my shirt now*

Lily: *What, you think because you are cute you can get away with robbing me?*

Shane’s smile splits his whole face open. His heart does this stupid pitter patter that he’s spent years failing to get under control.

He writes: *You can get it back if you come to the cottage*, but thinks better of it, deletes it, the smile falling off his face. He's not sure he'd be able to stomach the inevitable rejection.

Instead, he replies with a rather dry: *Something like that*.

Lily: *Skype me tonight wearing it and maybe I won't press charges*

Just like that, the smile's back on Shane's face.

3.

Shane's life these days can be summarized in one word: exhaustion.

He thought it would be easier when Ilya came to Ottawa—and in some ways, it is. But in others, it's kind of the same.

They still spend a lot of time on Skype, jacking off in increasingly creative ways, and laughing til their stomachs hurt, and talking about everything and nothing all at once.

And all the while, they're playing 82 games a season and building out the foundation. And Shane's learning Russian. Or trying to, at least.

They're flying back from a particularly brutal road trip and Shane's staring at the book in front of him, the letters all blurring together.

He can do this. He knows two languages already. What's one more?

He wants to be able to understand Ilya wholly. It frustrates him, how much gets lost in translation. How much his boyfriend holds back simply because he doesn't have a choice, doesn't have the words.

"Dude," Hayden says. "Take a nap. You look like shit."

"Thanks," Shane says flatly, not taking his eyes off the book. Hayden reaches over, wrestles Shane's glasses off his face. "Seriously?"

"You've gotta rest," Hayden says in what's very clearly his dad voice. "Besides, no one's ever learned a romance language on zero sleep."

"Russian isn't a romance language," Shane says. Hayden gives him a pointed look, and Shane's cheeks heat. It's been a month, and he's still not used to Hayden knowing. "Oh. Right."

"Not sure why you're going through all this trouble for him of all people," he grumbles. "But, like, it's no use to him if you're dead from exhaustion."

He's right. It's not like Shane's retaining anything at this point. He closes the book, pointedly ignoring Hayden's celebratory whoop.

Finally, he shuts his eyes. He dreams of gold and tender fingers and eyes always lighter in the sun.

When a hand nudges him awake, he's sure it's Ilya's, is startled to see Hayden staring at him. "Huh?"

"We're about to land," Hayden says, shooting him a wary look. "You should make the drive tomorrow."

"What?"

"You were gonna go to Ottawa tonight, right?" Hayden says. Shane's head pops up, suddenly awake with the fear that someone's, anyone's listening. "To see your parents," he adds a little louder.

"Yeah." It's not even a lie. He's having dinner with Ilya and his parents tonight. He's been really looking forward to it.

"Go in the morning."

"I can't."

Hayden drops his voice. "What, you can't spend one night without him?"

"I've already spent two weeks without him," Shane whispers, too tired to keep the annoyance out of his voice. "Would you go one more night without Jackie?"

"That's not..." he starts. Shane levels him a glare before Hayden can say something heartless like *that's not the same*. Like Shane's love matters less just because it makes no sense to Hayden, to anyone. "Okay. Fine. Take a cab though. Please? I don't want you to die because you're desperate to get laid."

Shane chokes a little. Sometimes he can't decide if he loves or hates that Hayden knows.

Ultimately though, he takes Hayden's advice. He's barely able to keep his eyes open while he packs, folding his clothes on feeling alone.

He calls a cab, sleeps through the ride, and when he gets to his parents' house, he all but collapses into Ilya's side.

"Sweetheart," Ilya whispers, running a hand through Shane's hair.

"Hi," Shane says, opening his eyes and trying to make out the TV. "What are we watching?"

"Nothing," his mom says. "Just rest, honey."

So he does. He's too tired to care that his parents are here, seeing this. Seeing his head nestled in Ilya's lap, Ilya's hand running through his hair.

It's still hard for him, being with Ilya around them. Sometimes, he's terrified that every brush of their fingers, every quick kiss on the cheek will tip the scales into too much territory. That knowing you have a gay son and seeing it are two different things, and they'll have no choice but to be disgusted by him.

He's sure that fear will come later, but right now, he doesn't have the energy for it. He lets his eyes shut, focused only on the steady rhythm of fingers parsing his hair, over and over again.

The next time he wakes up, Ilya's hand is still there. He can hear Alex Trebek on the TV, his mom quietly murmuring answers, the scratch of her pen as she tallies how many are correct.

"Did I sleep through dinner?" Shane slurs. It must be 7:30 if Jeopardy's on. "Sorry."

"It's okay," his dad says. "There's a plate for you in the fridge."

Shane's in the same exact position as before. He wonders if Ilya's eaten, or if he refused to get up, to disturb him. "Have you...?"

"Shower," Ilya says. "Then we'll eat."

Shane nods sleepily. Even in the shower, he can barely keep his eyes open. He tries to remember the last time he felt rested and fails miserably.

He pulls on a black T-shirt and sweatpants and heads out to the living room. His mom glances up at him, smiles, and two seconds later it drops off her face. "No. Not in my house."

"What?" Shane's stomach drops. He's been anticipating these words for a long time. For literal years. It doesn't make finally hearing them any easier.

"I don't care who you're dating, you're not wearing that here."

"Yuna," his dad says. "He's exhausted. Let the boy wear whatever he wants."

"He can wear anything as long as it's not *that*."

Shane frowns. He's starting to wonder if black T-shirts became offensive overnight and, like always, he missed the memo.

But then he glances down and realizes it's not a black T-shirt. No. It's a black Boston Bears shirt.

"Oh my God," he says. Okay, maybe he shouts it. "I didn't mean to..."

It's too late though. His mom's already looking at him like she's going to disown him and Ilya... Ilya's grinning like Shane gifted him a new sports car.

"Shane!" he gasps. "I didn't know you were a Bears fan."

"I'm—what was this even doing in my house?"

“I don’t know. I’m a Centaur.” Ilya points to his own Centaurs crewneck. “You must have a crush on some other NHL player, someone who plays for Boston. Should I be jealous?”

Shane’s parents both laugh while he sputters. “Shut up!” He wrestles it off, not able to wait til he gets back to the bedroom.

“Who is your secret lover? Marlow?”

Shane hustles out of the room. He doesn’t flip Ilya off in front of his parents, but it’s a near thing.

Once he’s safely in his bedroom, he puts on an actual plain black T-shirt, identical to the dozen other plain black T-shirts he owns. There. Better.

The door opens and Shane doesn’t have to turn to know that Ilya’s standing there, smirking. “I like seeing you with a bear on your chest too.”

“Shut up,” Shane says. Ilya steps forward, crowds Shane until he’s pushed flat against the wall. He scoffs. “Don’t tell me that did it for you.”

“No,” Ilya says. “I just didn’t get to say hello.”

“Oh. Hi.”

“Hi.” Ilya smiles, leans down, and kisses him. Like always, something clicks into place. Like the world makes sense again. “Would be nice to see you in my jersey though,” Ilya whispers.

“No. No way. That’s, like, asking to lose.”

“Mmm or it’s like asking to be fucked.”

“Stop,” Shane whispers, even while his body begs for the opposite. “Not here.”

To his surprise, Ilya relents, pulls off right away. “No. Has been too long. You will be very loud.”

Shane only proves his point by letting out a soft whine. “Later?”

“Yes.” Ilya traces one finger up the black T-shirt. “Later.”

4.

Ironically, it’s all Yuna’s fault.

She’s the one who spotted the small tear in Ilya’s neon orange suitcase and said, “absolutely not.”

She’s the one who got the genius idea to replace it with a suitcase from a brand deal Shane did two years back—one completely identical to his.

Ilya does have partial responsibility for the mix up. Fifteen percent at least.

He's the one who pushed Shane deeper into the mattress, despite Shane's murmured reminders that his plane to Tampa was leaving soon, Ilya's flight to Philadelphia leaving shortly after.

He's the one who pressed kisses along Shane's neck, his abs, his thighs until he was writhing, begging for more, forgetting about the time completely. Only Ilya could make him fall apart like that on a travel day—or really any day ending in Y.

Only Ilya could make him leave in such a frenzy that he grabbed the wrong suitcase.

He doesn't notice on the plane or on the bus.

It's not until he opens it and finds a haphazard stack of rumpled, brightly colored clothes that he realizes.

"No," he whispers, rifling through it. Maybe this is a prank somehow. Maybe underneath it all are his own clothes. But underneath is just more mess, more atrocious neons. "No, no, no."

"What?" Hayden asks from where he's spinning around in Shane's desk chair. He has his own room but followed Shane into his, always lost and homesick the first night away from Jackie.

"Shit." Shane runs a hand through his hair.

Hayden stands and frowns down at the suitcase. "You didn't fold your clothes? Who are you and what have you done with Shane Hollander?"

"It's Ilya's," he grits out. "I must have taken his suitcase by accident."

Hayden, rather unhelpfully, cackles. Very loudly. He picks up a tiger print button up, then cackles some more. "Oh, this is good. And fascinating. Like a look into the possessions of an evil mastermind." He starts brazenly fishing through the suitcase, raising his eyebrows when he procures a bottle of lube.

Shane knocks it out of his hand. "Stop snooping!"

"I know you wanna snoop too. Maybe there's, like, a love letter in here."

"There's not," Shane says. And then, he remembers his own suitcase, presumably in Philadelphia with Ilya. The letter *he's* been writing to Ilya, as a way to practice his Russian. As a way to practice what he might say to Ilya when... "Oh God."

He grabs his phone, calling Ilya and scrambling into the bathroom. "Hello," Ilya answers. "Your clothes are so boring. No color."

Shane groans. "I just realized...don't go through my stuff. Please."

"Why? Afraid I'll find your dildo?"

“I don’t travel with it,” Shane whispers, as if maybe Hayden will overhear both of them. God, he wishes Hayden would leave. This is utterly humiliating.

“You should. We could have some fun tonight. You, wearing my clothes...”

“Shut up,” Shane says, annoyed by the thrill the words send through him. Life would be so much easier if he wasn’t wrapped around Ilya Rozanov’s finger—or fingers is probably more accurate.

“I will not go through your stuff,” Ilya says, surprising him. “If you don’t go through mine.”

“Okay,” Shane says immediately. “Wait, why? What are you hiding?”

“What are *you* hiding?”

They’re both quiet, at a stalemate. Until, finally, Hayden shouts through the door, “I thought you said Rozanov quit smoking.”

Ilya curses in Russian. Shane flings the door open and finds Hayden holding up a pink t-shirt and a pack missing two cigarettes.

“Are you SERIOUS, Ilya?”

“Such a tattletale, Pike,” Ilya yells.

“He can’t hear you. You’re not on speaker.”

“Put me on speaker then.”

“No.”

“I’m gonna...” Hayden gestures to the door. “Enjoy your lover’s quarrel!”

When he’s gone, Shane sinks into the bed, sighing. “Ilya...”

“I am not smoking,” he says.

“Bullshit.”

“Is for emergencies.”

Shane throws his arms in the air even though Ilya’s not here to see it. “What emergencies?!”

“You know, when planes start to go down and you almost die.”

Shane sucks in a breath. They’re both quiet. He wants to say that he *knew* Ilya was smoking on the phone that night, but now isn’t the time.

“I’ve never been more scared than I was that day,” he says instead.

“I know, sweetheart.”

“Then don’t smoke. Or you’ll land yourself in the hospital and I’ll be that scared again.”

Ilya sighs. “I just didn’t throw out the pack after. Promise.”

“Well, I’m throwing it out now,” Shane says, but he doesn’t move. He clutches the cigarettes a little tighter, a piece of his soon to be husband. A tangible reminder that he’s still here.

“This means I can go through your suitcase.”

“No. Please don’t.”

“Why? You found my secret. I want yours.”

“It’s...” Shane pinches the bridge of his nose. “I wanted to practice my Russian. So I wrote some vows.”

“Vows?” The single syllable is startled, raw.

“Just as practice. Not sure if I’ll use them or anything. I just. I had feelings. After proposing.”

For a second, Ilya is quiet. It’s totally mortifying, and Shane knows it shouldn’t be. They’re *engaged* for God’s sake, but the vulnerability still physically pains him.

Finally, Ilya says, “Put on my clothes.”

“What?”

“You heard me. Put on my shirt. My underwear. I want you to wear them while you fuck yourself.”

Shane nearly trips over himself stumbling to the suitcase, cussing under his breath when he stubs his toe. It’s sort of amazing how much control Ilya has over him. Whether they’re a province away or states, if Ilya says jump, Shane does without even pausing to ask ‘how high?’

Shane pulls on a pair of black briefs, frowning down at his shirt choices. “You aren’t sure what to wear, are you?” Ilya asks, unnervingly psychic as always.

“There aren’t many good options.”

“Wear a Centaurs shirt.”

“No,” Shane says reflexively. “Absolutely not. That’s bad luck.”

“We aren’t playing against each other this week. Wear it.”

Shane runs a hand over a red t-shirt with Ilya’s name and number on the back. He shouldn’t. He knows that. But then he thinks about that plane.

If it had gone down, if the absolute worst had happened, it would have been Shane’s fault that Ilya was on it. If it weren’t for him, Ilya would have re-signed with Boston or maybe moved

somewhere more interesting, like LA, Vancouver.

Instead, he gave up Cup prospects and the respect of half the league for Shane. He almost lost everything, lost his very breath...

For Shane, for Shane, for Shane.

He swallows down the guilt, pulls the t-shirt on. He grabs the lube—Ilya's lube, fuck—and settles on the bed. "I'm wearing it. You're not getting a picture though."

"Is okay. I have a big imagination."

"Are you wearing my clothes?"

"No. I am naked." A decade. It's been a little over a decade since the first time he saw Ilya Rozanov naked, and just the mere words send a rush up him, his blood downward. "Where's your lube?"

"I have, uh, packets tucked into the book in the inner pocket of the main compartment."

A huff of laughter follows, along with the sound of zipping. "Why? Afraid someone will find out you touch yourself?"

"No. Fuck off."

"I don't think you want me to."

"No," Shane quietly admits. He never wants him to. If he could, he'd fall asleep every night with his phone open to a call, to the sound of Ilya's breathing.

"Ah, found it. Sneaky sneaky," Ilya says. "Your suitcase is so neat, so pretty. Like you."

Shane blushes, grateful that Ilya can't see it, aware that he probably knows it's happening anyway. "Yeah, well. Yours is a mess."

"I know. Put your glasses on, pretty boy." Shane does in seconds, glad that he keeps them on him on the plane. That he can do this for Ilya, even if he isn't here to see it. "Good. So good for me. Now read me your vows."

Shane chokes, the hand that was reaching for his underwear freezing. "No."

"Yes. I want to hear."

"They're not...I don't have them, anyways. My only copy's in my suitcase."

"Mmm, you remember," Ilya says, always so cocky, always so right. "I know you. I know you worked hard on them. Hard enough to remember every word."

Shane swallows. "Shouldn't I save them for our wedding day?"

"No. They are for me. Only for me."

Shane's dick twitches like the traitor it is. "Ilya," he whines. "I can't."

"Okay. Goodbye."

He hangs up. The absolute bastard hangs up. Shane scrambles for the phone, calling him back. Ilya answers in two rings, laughing hysterically. "You think you're so funny."

"I am," Ilya pants out. "Now tell me. Tell me while you touch yourself."

"You can't laugh. I know my Russian's awful."

The giggles (there's really no other word for them) stop short. "Shane. You could never be awful at anything," he says. "And you learned for me. Is...I never thought you would."

"No?"

"Thought it was talk. To get in my pants. Russian is hard to learn—or so I've been told," Ilya says.

"So is English."

"Yes. So talk. I will not laugh, and you will not come until you are done."

Shane nods, then remembering Ilya can't see it, says, "Okay."

He squirts some lube on his hand, strokes twice, exhaling in relief. Then, he reaches back into his memory as much as he can manage while rock hard, and speaks.

It starts with an apology. He remembers that much. Two, actually.

First, an apology that his Russian is awful, which makes Ilya release something akin to a laugh before he catches himself.

Then, an apology that he was never able to stop loving Ilya. That he knows how much easier Ilya's life would be with anyone else. There's an irony, Shane tells him, in wanting your partner's life to be smooth and adding bumps at every turn.

The language is much simpler than that, of course, but that's the basic idea. "I'm sorry," Shane says again in Russian, then lets out a little gasp, bucking up into his own hand. "Fuck, it's—this is so hard."

"No English," Ilya says in Russian, the sternness of his voice almost making Shane come on the spot. He takes the world's deepest breath to stop himself, stroking slower as he continues.

"I'm not happy your life is hard," Shane tells him in Russian, or attempts to at least. "But I'm so happy to love you. To know you. To know that you love cookies and cream ice cream and you forget to close cabinet doors and on good days, you smile in your sleep."

Ilya lets out a little sigh, the only confirmation that he's still listening. That maybe, he's touching himself too.

“Can I—” Shane tries in English.

“No.”

“There’s not much left,” he whines. “I didn’t get very far. Please, just let me—”

“Then finish. If there’s not much left, finish,” Ilya says, his own voice breathier, further away. “Finish before you finish.”

Shane tightens his grip. “Our love is hard, but loving you is easy,” Shane says agonizingly slowly. English is hard right now—so Russian is nearly impossible. But he manages. For Ilya, for this man he hasn’t been able to say no to since they were boys, he manages. “Thank you for letting me love you. For letting me—for letting me—”

“Come on,” Ilya says in English. “Keep going. You can do it, my perfect boy.”

Shane whimpers. “For letting me choose you,” he gasps out. Fuck, that wasn’t Russian. He tries again. Again. Until finally, he manages the words.

“Good,” Ilya says. Except it’s not Russian. It takes Shane’s ragged, desperate brain a moment to register that it’s not English either. No, it’s *French*. “So good. Come for me,” he says in French and Shane does with a yelp that borders on a scream, reaching a hand out to clutch the sheets for dear life.

A loud grunt and a string of Russian follows and he knows, distantly, that Ilya is coming too, but he doesn’t get to enjoy it. It’s a shame, but the fact of the matter is he’s not on this mortal plane of existence. He’s somewhere else. Somewhere between this brightly lit Florida hotel room and heaven.

“Holy shit,” he manages. “Ilya, that was amazing. Oh my God. And you...”

“Sweetheart,” Ilya breathes. “Stop. I don’t know French. Only this sentence.”

“Oh!” Shane didn’t realize he wasn’t speaking English. “Right. When did you learn that?”

“After your proposal,” Ilya says, the smile in his voice clear. “You were not the only one making plans for our wedding night.”

“Fuck.”

“I thought you might like it. Was it...okay?”

“Okay?” God, he’s so ridiculous, and Shane loves him so much. “Sorry, I—that was—*fuck*, Ilya. Way, way more than okay.”

“Good?” Ilya asks in French.

“Stop. I can’t go for another round.” He throws an arm over his eyes. “I think you killed me. In three languages.”

“We should switch suitcases again.”

“No way.” Shane grins. He’s already making mental plans to go shopping later for clothes to get him through the rest of the road trip.

But, well, it’s not like there’s any point buying pajamas when he could sleep in Ilya’s t-shirts. It would be a waste of money, that’s all.

5.

“This is a bad idea,” Shane whispers.

Ilya pushes him hard against the bathroom door. “Shane. We are getting married next month. This line does not work anymore.”

“But it *is* a bad idea,” Shane says. Okay, maybe he whines it.

“No. You being a human panic attack was a bad idea.” Ilya drops a kiss to his jaw. “Getting you alone and fucking the stress out of you is a good idea.”

It’s not the worst point. Today has taken a toll on him. It’s their first NHL awards as an out couple and he feels hot, almost blotchy from the attention.

Everyone keeps staring at them like they’re animals in a zoo or something. He didn’t want to go. He definitely didn’t want to *present*.

But the league is, in Farah’s words, scrambling. Dallas Kent’s impending court case is picking up more media attention, and what better way to shift the conversation than to remind everyone that Shane and Ilya were stupid enough to fall in love with each other?

They’re presenting together for the most sportsmanlike award. The league still has no spine, but they’ve grown a funny bone, apparently.

“We’re on in ten minutes,” Shane reminds Ilya. Ilya reaches out to pull off his suit jacket and Shane, well. Shane lets him. Ilya pulls his own off next, throws them both in a ball on the sink, not bothering to fold them. Shane’s torn between scolding him and just melting.

“Maybe even eight by now.”

“Good thing you come fast then.” Ilya works his lips backward, to that spot beneath Shane’s earlobe that he knows will pull a whimper out of him. It does, obviously. “Remember the last time we were in this bathroom?”

“Obviously,” Shane says through a sharp breath.

“You can beg me to get on my knees again if you want.”

“Uh, yeah, I’m good. I learned that lesson the hard way. Believe me, the last thing I want is a repeat of that night.”

Ilya draws back, blinks in surprise and something else. Hurt, maybe? “Oh? Was sexy. You showing off for me.”

“Yeah,” Shane admits. It was the first time he did that, but definitely not the last. “But I mean...you didn’t even kiss me.”

It’s been eight years. Next month, they’ll be married. It shouldn’t feel like a confession, but it does anyway.

“Couldn’t,” Ilya says.

“Couldn’t?”

Ilya shakes his head. He reaches a hand up, brushes his thumb over the freckles on Shane’s cheek. “If I kissed you, I never would have stopped.”

Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Shane surges forward, kisses him so hard that Ilya nearly topples over. He laughs, catches himself, catches both of them, and kisses him back and back and back.

Because they get this. They get to have this. Starting next month, they get to kiss forever, and Shane doesn’t care about those eight minutes anymore.

Wait, it must be seven by now. Or six?

Ilya picks him up by his thighs, lifts him til he’s on the counter. Then, he pushes between his legs and kisses him. And kisses him. And kisses him.

He kisses him so much that Shane isn’t sure he’s breathing. That he isn’t sure he’ll taste anything again besides Ilya’s lips. That he isn’t sure how he managed to walk away from the 2014 NHL awards in one piece without having this.

He spares a pitying thought for that Shane. How sad that he doesn’t get this, that he can’t even fathom it as a possibility.

“I love you,” Shane says against Ilya’s lips, because he gets that too.

“Love you,” Ilya murmurs back. He feels the words more than he hears them. Fuck, it’s a rush.

There’s a knocking sound somewhere (his heart rattling against his rib cage?), followed by a whispered, “Mr. Hollander?”

Shane yelps. Shit. Right. The awards. Have they kissed right through it? Would that be so awful? The commissioner already hates them.

He considers being quiet, pretending they’re not here, and making Ilya drop to his knees on this bathroom floor once and for all.

But he can't. Of course he can't. He slaps a hand over Ilya's mouth, and says, "Yes?"

A soft, "*Oh thank God*" follows. "Um, you're on in thirty."

Thirty? How the hell did that happen? "Sorry! Be out in a second."

"Do you know where Mr. Rozanov is?"

"Uh..." He slaps Ilya, who's cackling into his shoulder. Shane jumps down, snatching his jacket off the counter. "Yes. Yeah. One sec."

"Performance of the year," Ilya says. "You will win Oscar tonight."

"Shut up. Follow me in ten."

"We can walk out together—"

"No."

"Is not a secret anymore," Ilya reminds him, as if he's forgotten. As if the world will let him.

"It's a work event. That would be unprofessional."

Shane pushes the door open, flashing the young, waiting woman an apologetic smile.

He wishes he had time to fix himself up in front of the mirror, but he doesn't have such a luxury. Instead, he works on feeling alone.

Scrubs a hand over his jaw, wipes his lips, rustles his hair. Ilya joins him a moment later, winking as he does the same. Finally, just before he walks on stage, Shane pulls his jacket on.

It's not until he's approaching the podium that he realizes it. His jacket is way too long on him. He casts one quick, horrified glance at Ilya and finds that he's practically bursting out of his.

Oh God. *Oh God*. This is a nightmare. This is worse than a nightmare.

Can they play it off somehow? Can they work it into their bit? Can Ilya do that since he actually has a clue how to improvise?

Ilya rubs a hand up Shane's back, pats twice. Right. His line is first.

He sticks to the script, in the end. About how they're living proof that rivalries can be overcome, or something.

It's all sort of fuzzy. Shane feels like he's underwater without a snorkel. As soon as they're done, as soon as they've stepped away from the mic, Ilya places a heavy hand on his elbow. "Shane. Is fine."

"Oh my God," he whispers. "*Oh my God*."

“No one will notice!”

“Hi boys.” Shane turns to see Carter Vaughn grinning at them beside an equally amused Scott Hunter. “You know, based on your combined salaries, I thought you’d be able to afford decent tailors.”

Shane throws his hands up like *see*, before pulling the jacket off. He feels like a toddler with it on. Is Ilya really that much bigger than him?

“Okay, so Vaughn noticed. So what? Does not mean the audience did.”

“Uhhh...I think they did?” Scott clears his throat, staring down at his phone.

Shane doesn’t know what possesses him to do it, but he reaches out, lunges for the phone. Scott lets out a little ‘hey’ but he ignores it, because Oh God, what are people saying?

It’s not social media though. It’s a text thread with Kip, open to two messages:

Wtf?

Did they swap jackets? Were they fucking backstage?

Another one comes in while Shane’s staring at it in horror: *So unfair...*

Ilya cackles. “Aww, Hunter, your husband is jealous.”

“What?” Scott snatches the phone back, his face turning bright red when he looks down at it.

“What’d he say?” Carter asks, grinning.

Shane drags Ilya away by the arm before he can start any more shit. Then, he practically jogs toward the elevator bank, leaving him in the dust.

He pulls out his own phone, goes straight to social media.

Already, it’s a shitshow. The whole way back to the room, he reads post after post, ignoring Ilya’s pleas to put his phone away.

Lmfao remember when we had 0 out players in the league and now we have two FUCKING BACKSTAGE BEFORE PRESENTING AN AWARD?

Was that like part of the joke or something? Or did they actually literally swap jackets holy SHIT

I may or may not be zooming in on their jackets in search of cum stains 🧐

I knew Rozanov was into some freaky shit, but Hollander I’m surprised by tbh

“Shane,” Ilya says. They’re in the hotel room now. He doesn’t remember getting here.

“Breathe for me please.”

He breathes. Little by little, he breathes. “Good,” Ilya adds. “More.”

In. Out. In. Out. *Hollander I’m surprised by.* In. *Hollander I’m surprised by.* Out.

“Is okay,” Ilya says. “Everyone already knows we are a couple. Couples have sex. No big deal.”

Shane lets out a loud, delirious laugh. He sits down on the bed while Ilya pulls something out of the minibar. Vodka, probably. “Ilya, I can’t...I’m not *you*...I’m not allowed to...”

“What?” Ilya places a ginger ale into his hand. “Only I am allowed to be a slut?”

“Yes,” Shane says. Ilya raises his eyebrows, like *we both know that’s bullshit*. “In public, I mean. The rules are different for me.”

“They have rules against bottoms being sluts? Seems backwards.”

Shane scoffs. “Ilya, I...my image...in case you haven’t noticed, I’m not white.”

Ilya’s lips quirk up. “Yes, Shane, I think I have noticed this.”

“Really? Because it’s been, like, a decade and we’ve barely talked about it.”

The smirk falls away. Ilya sits down beside him, takes the can from Shane, opens it, then hands it back. Shane’s own hands are trembling. He didn’t realize. “We are not so good at this. Talking.”

“No. I think maybe we should get better at it before we get married.”

“Probably, yes.” Ilya nudges his shoulder lightly into Shane’s. “So tell me. Please.”

“It’s just...” Shane grasps at the air, searching desperately for the right words. “Everything I do is so much *bigger* than me. Every Asian kid who laces up a pair of skates looks to me, counts on me to be good. To be the best. To keep holding the door open for them.”

Ilya’s quiet for a moment and Shane holds his breath again, waits. “This is a lot to carry,” he says finally.

“Yeah. But I don’t have a choice. I never have. I can’t hide this part of me, you know?”

Ilya tilts his head, as if thinking. “This is why you didn’t want to come out.”

“No,” Shane says, then bites his lip, because that doesn’t feel true. “I mean, sort of. Yes. It’s part of it. I...I guess I already knew how hard it is. To be defined by one thing. To have people hate you for it and other people depend on you. None of the other gay players...”

“No. Just you.”

“Just me. Again.” He sets the ginger ale on the side table and lays back on the bed, letting out a deep sigh. Ilya falls back beside him. “And now there’s double the pressure, you know?”

Like if I screw up, I screw it all up for two communities.”

“Three. You can’t forget the community of boring Canadians.”

“Shut up.” Shane smiles. Ilya leans in, presses a kiss to his cheek.

“You are still a role model, Shane,” Ilya says softly. “You weren’t doing cocaine or robbing a bank. You were wearing your partner’s jacket. You were having sex with your fiancé. Is not a crime. Well, not here.”

Shane reaches out, traces Ilya’s cheekbone. “Technically, we didn’t have sex.”

“Oh no. Don’t worry, we can fix this.”

He lunges on top of Shane and Shane laughs, kissing him until the breath leaves him completely.

Ilya whispers something in Russian, and Shane lets out a quiet, “hmm?”

Ilya tilts his face to the side, presses his cheek to Shane’s. “You can always be bad with me,” he says. Shane snorts, but Ilya lifts his head, levels him a serious stare. “No, I mean...I can’t make the world love you more or expect less, but you can be whoever you want with me. Whoever you want. Always. Okay?”

“Okay,” Shane says softly, and then, he kisses him.

+1.

Shane rummages through the closet one more time.

He’s usually not this picky about what he wears, but Harris’s instructions for the Centaurs holiday party were clear: red, green, or blue only.

He pulls out a dark blue button up, but it doesn’t feel right for some reason he can’t place. Too formal, maybe.

He goes back to the closet again, pulling out a loose red button up that belongs to Ilya, has his husband’s sense of style written all over it. He runs a hand over the silky fabric and pulls it on.

He takes a look at it in the mirror, and nods at his reflection. Yeah. Better.

His first months with the Centaurs took a lot of adjusting. There really isn’t an NHL rule book for sharing a locker room, showers, and road trip hotel rooms with your husband.

Sometimes, it makes Shane spiral to no end. But he’s been trying to look at it differently in therapy. It’s sort of nice, he’s realized, being the ones who get to set the rules.

As they head into the new year, he’s starting to feel more settled, finally. Less like Ilya’s plus one and more like part of the team.

He heads to the rink on his own. Ilya arrived an hour ago, because of course when Harris said they needed a Santa, he lunged at the opportunity.

He spots Ilya immediately, on a plush red chair with his face half covered in a beard, eyes crinkled in a smile as he looks down at the toddler in his lap. Shane tries not to swoon too obviously.

“Hey,” he says to Harris and Troy who are laughing about something over cups of punch. “Has anyone caught onto the fact that Santa has a Russian accent?”

“I think I heard Wyatt telling them that it’s how they talk in the North Pole,” Troy says. “Something about all cold places being connected.”

“The wonders of his mind never cease.”

“You’re looking spiffy.” Harris smiles at Shane. “Is that Ilya’s shirt?”

Shane smiles back sheepishly. “That obvious?”

“No! Well, kind of.”

“I wanted to be festive.”

“I’m just glad *some* people followed the dress code.” He shoots a glare at his fiancé, who’s wearing a black T-shirt.

“What? I came right from the gym! If you want me to go home and change...”

“No.” Harris pulls him in close. “I want you right here.”

Well, that’s his cue. Shane steps away from them, toward his husband, who’s helping the toddler off his lap.

“HO HO HO,” Ilya shouts. “And what does little Shane Hollander want for Christmas?”

“Another cup ring,” Shane says flatly.

“What? Santa can’t hear you unless you are on his lap.”

“Ew,” a distinctly Dykstra sounding voice says.

Unfortunately, one of the kids nods seriously. “He’s right. You have to sit on his lap.”

“So smart. This is why you are on the nice list, Rita.” The girl giggles.

Shane sighs, relenting. He hovers over Ilya’s lap, but Ilya pulls him in closer by the collar of his shirt. “Hi,” he says. “Did you mean to wear this?”

Shane frowns down at the shirt. “Yes? Is that a problem?”

“No. I am just surprised. Good surprise.” He leans in closer and drops his voice, “I like it. A lot.”

Shane’s cheeks heat. “I’m telling Mrs. Claus.”

“No problem. I like being on the naughty list.”

“Santa isn’t on either list. He’s Santa. He makes the lists.”

“You are so bad at roleplaying,” Ilya whispers.

“Ew, I don’t want to roleplay with you as Santa.”

“Fine, fine, go get me a cookie then,” Ilya says. “But first, you have to tell me what you want. HO HO HO!”

“When I found out I’d be playing with the biggest hoe in the NHL, this isn’t what I was expecting,” Wyatt, who’s by their side dressed as an elf, murmurs. Ilya reaches a gloved hand out to lightly whack him.

“I don’t know if I want anything. I mean, another cup ring like I said, but other than that... I’m pretty happy with what I have.”

“Ugh,” Ilya says. “Go put on a Mrs. Clause costume so I can kiss you.”

“Orrr you could get out of your Santa suit.”

“Help me out of it?” Ilya bats his eyelashes at him.

“Jesus,” Wyatt says. “Santa, I want noise canceling headphones for Christmas.”

“Too bad, you are on the naughty list for being rude to Santa. You work for me, remember?”

“Come on.” Shane’s about to rise and help Ilya up, when Bood materializes in front of him.

“Don’t move, this is pure gold. Harris!”

“Already on it.” Harris walks up with Gen, who starts gleefully snapping photos. Shane groans, hides his face in Ilya’s shoulder.

“Hang on,” Bood says loudly. “Is that Roz’s shirt?”

“Yeah,” Shane says, finally looking up to flash a bashful smile at the camera. “It is.”

End Notes

And then in true bottom fashion, Shane starts stealing his clothes constantly and Ilya is left murmuring “where is that shirt?” while (not so) secretly eating it up

Thanks for reading! I love your comments as much as Ilya loves seeing Shane in his clothes

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