Until Then, We'll Have To Muddle Through, Somehow

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/76752996.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	fluff with a sprinkling of angst, Secret Relationship, Christmas Eve, Holidays, Domestic Fluff, Post Canon (as of 1x06)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-31 Words: 2,082 Chapters: 1/1

Until Then, We'll Have To Muddle Through, Somehow

by damnit_aoidee

Summary

Why he was putting up a tree for less than three days was beyond Ilya's understanding, but it was cute anyway, and afforded him the best view in the house as the multicoloured lights bathed Shane's soft skin in diffused rainbows as he meticulously placed ornaments on the branches. Small frowns and pleased smiles as he found places for the obscene amount of small silver bells he was for some reason in possession of.

Ilya hummed, content.

"What?" Shane asked, glancing back at him, and Ilya shrugged with a smirk. "Ilya. What?"

or, Shane and Ilya spend their first Christmas Eve together

Notes

I'm cracking out one final fic before the end of 2025, and its for a whole new fandom which feels a little silly but hey ho. The 38 or whatever Buddie wips I have will still be there tomorrow. It feels kind of hilarious to tag a fic with secret relationship when thats the whole concept of the canon but, since this is pre-outing and does touch on it still being a secret, I figured it was needed.

I don't have anything else in the pipeline for Hollanov but I was absolutely captivated by Heated Rivalry and I wanted some Christmas vibes so have this! Also, I have only seen the show and read Heated Rivalry so I haven't tagged the book fandom because I know barely anything about post TV canon so have NO idea if this would fit into the book world as well.

Title from the original Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas performed by Judy Garland in Meet Me In St Louis. Its a much more mournful version of the song than the version Sinatra recorded, but has my preferred lyrics (and maybe suits the vibe here a little better).

Enjoy <3

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya's flight landed 8 hours before Shane's was due. And because it would be stupid to hang around the airport for that long, even if he wasn't Ilya Rozanov in Shane Hollander's home airport at Christmas with no explanation to give that wasn't far too revealing, he went alone. Arrived at Shane's glass-fronted cottage just as dawn broke over the lake and let himself in with the key Shane gave him at the end of the Summer.

It was… odd. Being in Shane's cottage without him. So different from the two weeks they spent here together. Its wide open spaces weren't filled with their things. There were empty spaces everywhere. No slippers lying in wait to comfort cold feet. The only decor, Shane's ob*noxiously* Canadian blankets, were artfully draped over the back of every couch instead of folded up how Shane liked them. The windows and glass doors were all missing the handprints and smudges from Ilya and Shane had painted across them just existing in the house. But the heating was on and the house was warm because Shane's parents were only ten minutes away and they knew Ilya was coming. And no, that shouldn't have made his heart do anything at all, because they were cooking dinner for them both on Christmas Day so of course they *had* to know Ilya was coming at some point, but knowing they'd gone to the effort of finding out when he was arriving and making sure the cottage was warm for him? His heart ached to thank them.

Instead he took his overnight bag up to Shane's bedroom and had a long hot shower to scrub the plane off him.

He didn't afford the same luxury to Shane when he eventually arrived, taking him on the dining room table without exchanging more than cursory greetings. It had been nearly a month since they'd last been together, and Ilya was planning on making the most of the privacy. He made Shane come twice in the shower too, Shane letting out beautiful little sobs as Ilya finished inside him with his teeth scraping against his shoulder. It was a job well done. Boyfriend officially greeted.

Shane's parents had learned not to disturb them so now the cottage really did offer the privacy they had both been craving. It gave them the time and space they needed to relearn the joy of being together, and to exchange the quiet love confessions Ilya wished he could hear every night and every morning.

Now Ilya was nursing a hot chocolate, cradled lazily in a mountain of cushions and blankets on the sofa, in the softest pyjamas he had ever been gifted, watching Shane setting up his Christmas tree. Why he was putting up a tree for less than three days was beyond Ilya's understanding, but it was cute anyway, *and* afforded him the best view in the house as the multicoloured lights bathed Shane's soft skin in diffused rainbows while he meticulously placed ornaments on the branches. Small frowns and pleased smiles as he found places for the obscene amount of small silver bells he was for some reason in possession of.

Ilya hummed into the quiet, content and happy and warm.

"What?" Shane asked, glancing back at him, and Ilya shrugged with a smirk. "Ilya. What?"

Ilya gestured for Shane to come closer, and across the room he came, accompanied with a warm confused smile, until he got close enough that Ilya could pull him down on top of him and use Shane's body weight as a blanket, trace his thumb across Shane's cheek, and marvel that he could feel anything so strongly as he felt *this*. He'd spent so long suffocating his feelings, but now, here, with Shane, he could feel it all, show it all. More than that. Shane felt it too.

He didn't have the English to explain the depth of it. Didn't have the Russian either.

"It is good. This. Here. You."

Shane pressed a slow kiss into Ilya's lips then leaned back up, a slight flush accenting his freckles, and asked "Yeah?"

"Yes."

"You like Christmas?" Shane asked after a moment looking down at him.

Ilya tipped his head to the side dismissively, "Ah, no. It is this I like. You. I like Christmas with you."

Shane's smile grew into his eyes. He pressed a soft kiss to Ilya's cheekbone, another to his forehead, and said, "I like Christmas with you, too."

Shane dropped his head down to rest on Ilya's chest and curled his arm around Ilya's side. Ilya laced their fingers together. For a moment he held still in the warm embrace of Shane's body, just focused on the feel of their chests rising and falling together. But his mind inevitably returned to reality and he involuntarily started counting how many hours they had left together.

It wasn't enough.

"You play the day after Boxing Day, yes?"

Shane nodded, voice low like he was mourning the lack of time too, without Ilya having to say a word about it, "Yeah, The Admirals."

"Ah, Scott Hunter."

Shane snorted softly, then lifted himself up on one arm, "There are other people on the team, you know."

"What?" Ilya asked, pretending for a moment to be shocked before dropping the tease and trying to knock Shane back into his chest by displacing his arm.

Shane dodged him, moving where his hand was braced into the couch and replanting it where Ilya could no longer hope to knock it down. Ilya rested his free hand against Shane's waist instead.

"No. Is just him," Ilya said, "Old Man New York."

Shane chuckled and asked, “Will you be watching?”

Ilya shrugged, nonchalant and lying, knowing Shane would see through the tease to the truth anyway, “No. It will be boring. I will watch highlights and even that will be boring. New York Grandpa vs most boring team in Canada. Why would I watch when instead I can talk about the charity with your mother.”

Shane grinned down at him, lighting up in the way he always did when Ilya called him boring. So bright Ilya couldn’t help but grin back up at him.

“She’s uh– She’s got a meeting with the Bank of Canada in January. Start setting up some of the initial accounts.”

“I know, we have spoken. She is opening them in your name only, and we will add mine later. Before the announcement. Make it seem as if you were setting up and I joined later, yes? If anyone looks at dates.”

Shane frowned, “No one’s going to look into it that closely, will they?”

Ilya shrugged, “Does not matter. Is no need for my name to be on them yet. I am not in Ottawa until Summer at least. If they even want.”

“They want,” Shane said instantly. “They *will* want you. Mom’s certain they’ll be shopping for a strong centre, right when you’re looking.”

Ilya hummed and ran his free hand idly up Shane’s side. Svetlana had said the same when he had broached the idea of signing away from Boston. He trusted Svetlana, and given that their opinions often aligned (and often came to pass) he was started to trust Yuna’s predictions as well.

“Okay then,” Ilya said, “No problem. We have been thinking I will have to shop to others too. Allow them to make offers. To continue lie that I did not choose Ottawa especially. Maybe Toronto. Maybe New York.”

“It’s not a lie,” Shane said quickly, and Ilya detected a slight panic enter Shane’s eyes before his face smoothed over.

Ilya frowned, “It is a lie. I already know where I will go.”

“It’s not. You’re not- You're not a liar.”

Ilya cocked his head as Shane pushed off him, wriggling the hand they had been holding until Ilya let him free his fingers. He passed back to the tree and Ilya watched him as he went back to what he had been doing with the ornaments, distinctly less content than he had been before. Ilya propped himself up on his elbows and frowned at the back of Shane’s head.

“Shane.”

“Yeah?” Shane replied, voice light and tight. Not turning to look at him.

“Hollander. You are mad?”

“No? I’m not mad.”

“Shane.”

“I’m not mad.”

Still not turning round. Voice too even.

Ilya frowned again, flopped his head back against the couch cushions to look blankly up at the ceiling to run back over the conversation to try and pinpoint exactly what it was Ilya had said that had upset Shane so much he had had to walk away.

Lie.

“Was lie not right word?” he asked the back of Shane’s head.

Shane shook his head, “It’s fine Ilya.”

“It does not seem fine,” Ilya replied, pushing off the sofa and padding over to him. He knelt next to him. His eyes were wet and his jaw was tense as he meticulously hung shiny decorations at even distances along the bottom of the tree. “Okay, it’s not lie. Is something else.”

He didn’t respond.

“Shane,” Ilya tried again. “I–”

“Can we not talk about it? The plan? Please?” Shane asked, eyes and hands still focused on decorating the tree, “Can we just have Christmas together?”

Ilya nodded slowly, watching him carefully as he asked, “Is it that you don’t want to talk about it or that you don’t want to do it?” He carefully resisted the urge to pick at the skin on his thumb while he waited for Shane's answer.

Shane shook his head, swallowed, then said, “Talk. I don’t want to talk about it. I– I know we have to. I’m not saying we can’t. But can we do it later? When we’re not together? On the phone? I don’t– I don’t want to waste this. We don’t get that much time and–”

Ilya hooked a finger round Shane’s jaw and pressed a kiss into his lips.

“We don’t have to talk about it,” Ilya murmured into his mouth, “We can just be.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane whispered back, “I’m sorry. I *do* know we have to talk about it. It just– It makes me feel like shit.”

Ilya kissed him again, then pulled Shane to rest on his shoulder, “Is okay. We can do this over the phone. Like you say. Later. On conference call with your mother. We do not have to talk about it now. We can just be... in the moment. For Christmas. Yes?”

“Yeah?” Shane asked, pulling back and finally making eye contact again. Ilya kissed him again.

“Yes. Christmas. Here, give me this,” he pulled one of the bells out of the box of far too many bells. “Tell me where.”

“You decide.”

Ilya shook his head and pursed his lips, “Ah, no. You will just move it when I am not looking. Like the blankets.”

Shane spluttered, “I don’t–” he huffed. “You just throw them.”

Ilya said, “You ‘just throw them’ also,” knowing Shane would take the bait. He was instantly rewarded with a Shane huff.

“Yeah, but so they look good. Over the back of the couch or something,” Shane said, laughing and indignant at the same time. “You just scrundle them up in a ball like it doesn’t matter what things look like.”

Ilya nodded, grin growing wide, “Mm. Scrundle. Strong English word.”

“Shut up,” Shane replied, also grinning. Also leaning back in for a kiss. Ilya dodged him.

“Ah! No. We have to dress the tree, Shane. For Christmas. No distractions. Until it is done and pretty.”

Shane laughed, rolling his eyes, “Fine.”

“Tell me where. I do not want to ‘scrundle’.”

“Shut *up*. Asshole.”

Ilya nudged him, and waggled the bell. Shane, rolling his eyes, pointed at the branch he’d obviously already chosen before Ilya had even picked it up.

He let Shane dictate him putting a few decorations onto the tree, then he shuffled back and let him do it himself, bracketing his legs around Shane’s as he worked his way through the many *many* decorations he was hanging and cradling Shane into his chest, letting his chin rest on Shane’s shoulder as he worked.

He could live here, at Shane’s back, for the rest of his life and be happy.

One day, not soon, they’ll be able to do this at a party surrounded by their friends and teammates and family, and no one will blink an eye.

For now, Ilya was happy to do it in private.

Just for them.

End Notes

I feel a little like I regressed Ilya's Russianisms to their early relationship but here's my reasoning: he's tired and doesn't feel like he has to over perform English with Shane because Shane gets him like he gets Shane. You know what I mean?

Belated Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year <3 Cheers to another year of being embarassing!

Come yap to me on tumblr

(PS if anyone has suggested tags, please let me know in the comments, I am trying to get better at tagging)

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