

Midnight, Finally

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Midnight, Finally

by [OpalApparition](#)

Summary

There's a Russian tradition: write your deepest wish on paper, burn it at midnight, swallow the ashes in champagne. For ten years, Ilya Rozanov has written the same name. This New Year's Eve, with his husband in his arms, he has nothing left to wish for.

Notes

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

Ilya stood at the kitchen counter, knife in one hand, lime in the other, watching Shane answer the door for the third time in ten minutes. Troy Barrett ducked through the doorframe—still too tall for his own good—with Harris trailing behind him, carrying what looked like an entire bakery’s worth of desserts.

“You said bring something,” Harris was saying, defensive already.

“I said bring *a* something,” Shane corrected, laughing, taking two of the boxes. “Not *everything*.”

Ilya squeezed lime juice into the pitcher of margaritas, citrus misting his knuckles. *Nash dom. Nash prazdnik*. The Russian words sat warm in his chest. Their house. Their party. Six months since they’d gone public, four months since the wedding, and the language he’d kept locked away—*our, ours, mine*—could finally live in the open air. Shane’s laughter carrying through the rooms without anyone flinching, without anyone wondering why Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander were hosting New Year’s Eve together. Six months since they’d gone public, four months since the wedding, and Ilya still caught himself waiting for the other skate to drop.

It never did.

He poured tequila, measured the triple sec. His hands knew this ritual from years of making drinks alone in hotel rooms, hands that had mixed cocktails for one while his phone stayed dark and silent. Except now Shane would drink half of this batch and complain it was too strong, that it wasn’t in his macros, steal another glass anyway, and Ilya would kiss him to shut him up.

And no one would *care*.

The ring on his finger caught the overhead light. White gold, simple, exactly like Shane’s. Ilya had worn the engagement ring hidden under his gear for months, the chain leaving marks on his skin, his heart. *Navsegda*. Forever. The ring would stay there forever, a small gold declaration that Ilya Rozanov had stopped running. This one sat visible on his left hand where anyone could see it. Where everyone had seen it, actually, and where Ilya hoped everyone would continue to see.

Almost everyone.

Mama would have loved him, Ilya thought, not for the first time.

She would have seen what Ilya saw: Shane’s kindness that ran bone-deep, the way he listened like every word mattered, how he tried so hard at everything even when he was terrible at it. *Especially* when he was terrible at it. She would have loved Shane’s earnestness, would have laughed at his careful Russian pronunciation, would have taught him to make *pirozhki* in this very kitchen.

Shane appeared in the kitchen doorway, cheeks flushed from the cold. “Ryan just texted. He and Fabian are running late.”

“Traffic?”

“Fabian’s soundcheck ran over.” Shane grinned. “Apparently being an up and coming musician means you can’t just leave when you want to.”

“Of course he can. You tell musician there is better party, he obeys. This is science.” Ilya assured, “First married New Year’s party. This is historic event. People will regret missing, they will lie later and say they were here.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “Try not to embarrass me.”

“Impossible. I am extremely charming.”

“You’re extremely *something*.”

Ilya abandoned the margaritas and crossed the kitchen in three strides, caught Shane’s face between his hands, and kissed him hard enough that Shane made a surprised noise against his mouth. When they broke apart, Shane’s pupils were wider and his lips were wet.

“See?” Ilya said. “Charming.”

“That’s not—” Shane started, but Wyatt’s voice carried in from the front hallway, loud and cheerful, and Shane turned toward it, still smiling. Ilya let him go.

By eleven, the house was full, and so was his heart.

Shane’s mother was in the kitchen arranging plates since she’d insisted on bringing food, had shown up with containers of *ozōni* and *kuromame* that she explained were for good fortune. Shane’s father stood near the window with Harris, gesturing with his beer as he described some play from the ‘94 finals. They looked comfortable here, settled into the house like furniture that had always belonged. Ilya had worried about this, their first New Year’s hosting Shane’s parents, their team, their friends... but Shane’s mother Yuna had hugged him at the door—Ilya had braced for interrogation and instead got approval. He would accept it graciously. He was very good at being approved of—but she only squeezed affectionately at his shoulders and David had clapped him on the back and asked about the Centaurs’ playoff chances.

Normal. This was normal now. It was hard to believe it was *his*.

Ilya leaned against the back of the couch, beer in hand, listening to Dykstra tell some elaborate story about his kids and a New Year’s resolution involving vegetables. The bottle was slick with condensation, and he pressed his thumb against the label, peeling up one corner. Across the room, Shane was showing Harris something on his phone—probably photos of the cottage, based on the way Harris kept nodding enthusiastically. Troy had his arm slung across the back of Harris’s chair, relaxed in a way that still startled Ilya sometimes. Open. Easy.

That could be them now. That *was* them now.

Ilya's thumb stilled on the bottle.

That... was them now. The realization still felt impossibly huge, and so too was the relief.

"You're doing the thing again," Dykstra said.

Ilya blinked at him. "What thing?"

"The staring-at-your-husband-like-a-creep thing." Dykstra grinned. "It's cute, but also kind of weird."

"I am not staring. I am married. This is my job now."

"Sure, cap."

Ilya took a long drink of his beer to avoid responding. He did not argue with people who were objectively wrong. He let the cold wash down his throat. *Mozhet byt'*. Maybe Dykstra was right. But so what? He'd spent years *not* staring, years training himself to look anywhere except at Shane Hollander, and now he could look as much as he wanted. He'd earned it.

Shane glanced up then, as if feeling Ilya's attention, and their eyes met across the room. Shane's mouth curved up at one corner—that private smile, the one Ilya had seen in hotel rooms and empty rinks and the cottage at dawn. Except now it wasn't private. Now it was Shane's face doing what Shane's face did when he looked at Ilya, and it still undid him every time. After everything—after Vegas, after the rooftop, after two months of silence, after Montreal, after the proposal on the dock—that look could still crack him open. *Moya lyubov*. My love. The words he'd whispered in Russian for years before he could say them in English.

Finally.

Ilya couldn't say with certainty, after all these years, what he'd been doing the first New Year's Eve after meeting Shane. Eight days they'd known each other then. Eight days of hating Shane Hollander's perfect face, his perfect manners, Mr. Perfect, the way everyone loved him immediately. Ilya had probably been drunk somewhere, probably hadn't thought about Shane at all.

On mgnovenno raspoznaval lozh', kak tol'ko slyshal yeyo.

He had always been excellent at pretending this was coincidence, but Ilya always knew a lie as soon as he heard it, even the ones he told himself.

Because maybe, for half a second at midnight, he'd wondered what Shane was doing. Maybe he'd shoved the thought down like swallowing glass and taken another shot.

Their rookie season—2009—he'd been at some teammate's house in Boston, drunk on cheap beer and the high of finally making it to the NHL. Shane was probably in Montreal doing the

same. The thought had crossed Ilya's mind at midnight. He remembered that much, and remembered pushing it down.

Then July 2010: Shane on his knees in that Toronto hotel room, Shane on the bed with his legs dangling off the edge, his stupid folded clothes, and Ilya's hand in his hair. Shane's mouth hot and perfect and *there*, and afterward Shane had disappeared for six months like it had never happened, and New Year's Eve found Ilya at a Pittsburgh bar, surrounded by women in glittering dresses who kept touching his arm. One of them kissed him at midnight. Her lips tasted like champagne and strawberry lip gloss and felt like absolutely nothing. Shane was probably in Montreal at some party, probably kissing some girl too, probably forgetting Ilya existed.

Ty dolboeb. Idiot. He'd stood under scalding water and touched himself thinking about Shane's mouth, Shane's hands, the small sound Shane had made with those plush lips stretched around his cock, eyes fluttering shut as he sucked and *sank* into a float.

He'd come with Shane's name trapped behind his teeth, bitten back like every other truth he couldn't speak.

Shane hadn't texted.

The years blurred together after that, a procession of midnights spent wanting. Post-Vegas, post-rooftop, post-everything-changing-without-either-of-them-admitting-it, Ilya had been in Denver checking his phone. 12:01. 12:05. 12:47. Nothing. They'd gone six weeks without speaking and Ilya had told himself he didn't care, that Shane was nobody, that the hookups meant less than nothing. And it hurt, and he didn't know what to do for it not to hurt. He turned to tradition, the one he learned as a child: Write your deepest wish on paper. Burn it as the clock strikes midnight. Drop the ashes into champagne. Drink it before the final chime—twelve seconds, twelve swallows—and the wish becomes sealed in your bones.

He tried it alone in a dark room, writing *Shane Hollander* in Cyrillic across hotel stationery, the letters shaping a name that didn't exist in Russian, that shouldn't exist anywhere in his thoughts. The paper curled black at the edges, Shane's name disappearing into ash and smoke. Ilya dropped the fragments into cheap champagne and drank it down, carbonation burning his throat, tasting like carbon and want and stupidity.

The tradition didn't specify what happened if your wish was impossible. Russian traditions were famously optimistic.

He'd still checked his phone.

A text from Jane: *Happy New Year*

Another year found him in a Pittsburgh hotel room with a kitchenette he didn't know how to use. He'd looked up an Olivier salad recipe on his phone—the kind his mother used to make, not that she'd ever written her recipe down, but he remembered the proportions, the way her hands moved. Potatoes, eggs, peas, pickles, everything suspended in mayonnaise. New Year's food. The smell alone meant something he couldn't name in English.

He burned the potatoes. All of them.

He ordered room service instead and ate a hamburger at 11:47 PM, alone, while *Irony of Fate* played on his laptop—the same Soviet film he’d watched every year since he was six. A man gets drunk on New Year’s Eve, takes the wrong flight, ends up in the right stranger’s apartment. Ilya knew every line. He could recite the dialogue in his sleep.

The main characters kissed at midnight on screen while Ilya burned paper in the hotel bathroom sink, Shane’s name curling into ash for the second year running.

Ilya’s fingers found the ring on his left hand, turned it once. The metal was warm from his skin. By 2012 they were hooking up again; sporadic, shameful, always in cities where no one knew them. Some club in Dallas, a teammate trying to set Ilya up with a girl in a silver dress. She’d kissed him at midnight and Ilya had felt nothing except the phantom weight of Shane’s hands on his hips two nights before in a Phoenix hotel room. He turned the ring again, felt the ridge of it against his knuckle.

Someone turned up the music. Bass vibrated through the floorboards under Ilya’s feet. Manhattan, 2013. Wall-to-wall bodies and champagne that cost more than Ilya’s first car. Shane had been there—Ilya had spotted him within thirty seconds of arriving. Shane tucked into a corner with Hayden and some of the Montreal guys, laughing at things Ilya couldn’t hear. At midnight, Shane kissed some blonde on the cheek—friendly, performative—and Ilya watched from behind his beer bottle, hating every second. Hating that Shane looked so comfortable being *normal*. Hating that three hours earlier they’d fucked in a bathroom stall and now Shane was playing straight.

Ilya had left at 12:04 and walked back to his hotel in the freezing rain. He didn’t burn a wish that year, unable to bring himself to write Shane’s name again just to watch it disappear.

2014 began with humiliation: Russia crashing out of Sochi without a medal, Shane skating away with gold around his neck. Ilya won the Cup in June to prove he was still the best, and Shane had shown up in Vegas afterward. Ilya’s suite at 2am, Shane on his knees with Ilya’s hand twisted in his hair. Shane on the bed, flushed and more precious than any win.

“Show off for me,” Ilya had said, and Shane had.

And then it was over.

Six months later found Ilya at some club in Miami with teammates, bottle service and models who kept trying to sit in his lap. He was supposed to be celebrating—Cup champion, life of the party, living the dream. His phone stayed face-down on the table. At midnight, someone thrust champagne into his hand and a girl with dark hair kissed him. She tasted like vodka and vanilla and *nichego*. Nothing.

He kissed her back anyway because Shane was probably doing exactly what Ilya was doing—pretending this was enough, that wanting didn’t hurt, that ten seconds of connection at midnight could sustain them through another year of distance.

At 2am, Ilya checked his phone in the bathroom. No texts. He typed *Happy New Year* to Shane and stared at it for three minutes before deleting it unsent.

Arizona, 2015. Shane in Montreal. They'd been hooking up again for months by then—sporadic hotel rooms in random cities, always leaving before dawn. Ilya had gone to some teammate's house party, played beer pong, flirted with the host's sister. At 11:58, his phone buzzed.

Shane: where are you?

Ilya had stepped outside to call him. They'd counted down together over the phone, Shane whispering from what sounded like a bathroom.

"Happy New Year, Rozanov."

"Happy New Year."

Neither of them hung up for three minutes. Three minutes of Shane breathing on the other end of the line. Three minutes of Ilya counting the seconds, learning the rhythm of Shane's exhales like he was memorizing music. *Ya zdes*. I'm here. He couldn't say it aloud but maybe Shane could hear it anyway in the silence, in the fact that neither of them hung up.

Kak by mne khotelos', chtoby ty byl zdes'.

November 2016 had been the tuna melt. Shane sitting on Ilya's couch in Ilya's shirt, looking soft and rumpled and dangerous, and Ilya had let himself want too much. Had called him Shane instead of Hollander while they were fucking, had felt Shane go still beneath him before pretending it hadn't happened.

Shane had bolted. *I can't do this.*

Two weeks later, Ilya saw him in the papers, in the news, in Rose Landry's arms. New Year's Eve, Ilya was in Los Angeles at some sponsor event, surrounded by people in expensive clothes drinking expensive champagne. Shane was in Montreal, probably at some picture-perfect party with Rose, probably kissing her at midnight like a normal person living a normal life.

I can't do this.

Ilya's phone stayed in his pocket. At 12:47 am, standing alone on a hotel balcony, he finally checked, finding only the dark.

But then 2017—Shane and Rose had broken up. There was Tampa Bay and their first time playing together, room 1217 and then his fucking father *died*. He died, and everything was awful and Shane had listened. Shane's concussion and the delirious, adorable *Will you... cometomycottagethissummer?* And no, he couldn't, he *couldn't*, but then there was Scott Hunter, and he *could*. He had to. There were loons and love and... Shane's parents *knew*. They knew, and somehow the world hadn't ended. Ilya had flown back to Boston after those

two weeks at the cottage, returned to his empty penthouse with Shane's smell still on his clothes.

New Year's Eve he'd gone to a team party, stood on some rooftop bar in the freezing cold. At midnight everyone around him was kissing—teammates with wives, girlfriends, strangers grabbing strangers. Ilya's phone rang.

Shane, calling from his parents' house in Ottawa where he'd gone for the holidays.

"Hey."

"Hey."

They talked for forty minutes about nothing. Ilya could hear Shane's family laughing in the background.

"*Ya lyublyu tebya.*"

"*Ya-loo-blue-tee-baa,*" Shane murmured back.

When they hung up, Ilya realized he was smiling.

By 2018, they were in the same city. Ilya was in Ottawa now, had been since November, and Shane was visiting his parents for the holidays. They'd talked about seeing each other—we could meet somewhere, just for an hour—but Shane had a family thing and Ilya had a team thing and it was too risky anyway, as painful as it was to admit. Ilya spent the evening at Dykstra's house with half the Centaurs roster, watching Dykstra's kid smash cake into the carpet. His phone stayed in his pocket. At 11:47, he excused himself to the bathroom and called Shane.

They counted down together, again. Thirteen seconds of Shane breathing on the other end of the line, *I love you, I love you*, before Shane's mother called his name and he had to go.

The cottage, 2019. The two of them alone and *together* for the first time on New Year's Eve in all these years. They'd made their own midnight at eleven because Shane had an early flight, counted down from ten while sitting on the kitchen floor with a bottle of wine between them. Ilya had kissed him at zero, tasted merlot and Shane's minty toothpaste, felt Shane's fingers twist in his shirt. Perfect and theirs and... secret.

Ilya had cried after, pressed his face into Shane's shoulder and said, "*I wish we could do this for real.*"

Eto realno, Shane had told him—*this is real* in his flat English—but they'd both known what Ilya meant. Real like other people had real. Real like Troy and Harris, like his teammates and their wives. Real like coming home to someone who could actually be called home, whose name you could say—Lily, Jane, *lyubimyy*—without checking who was listening.

The documentary had aired in the fall of 2020. For the first time, Shane could see footage of Ilya crouched over Shane's unconscious body after the Marlow hit, Ilya's face gray with terror, Ilya refusing to leave even when medics shoved him aside. The whole hockey world

had watched it. Some people had made comments online—*kind of intense for rivals, no?*—but most had moved on.

No one knew. No one suspected.

Ilya had sat in some interview and said Shane was a great competitor, a nice guy, all the safe bullshit, when what he'd wanted to say was *everything*.

New Year's Eve, Shane was in Montreal. Third Cup. Conn Smythe trophy. The best year of his career and Ilya had watched every second from his living room in Ottawa, wanted to be there and *couldn't*.

He was dying.

He went to Dykstra's again—it was becoming tradition, apparently—and spent the evening playing with Bood and avoiding questions about his New Year's resolution. His phone buzzed at 11:52.

Jane: I hate this.

Then: I'm in the bathroom at my parents' house hiding from everyone.

Then: I just want to be with you.

Ilya stepped out onto Dykstra's back porch into the freezing December night. He called Shane. They counted down together, Shane's family laughing somewhere in the background, Dykstra's kid shrieking inside.

"Happy New Year," Shane whispered.

"Next year," Ilya said. *"Next year, I tell you in person."*

He didn't know how. He didn't know when. Shane made a small noise that might have been agreement or might have been despair, and Ilya closed his eyes against the ache in his ribs.

Now this. 2021. Tonight.

The year had cracked them open. January—Ilya writing *I love you* in a text because he'd thought the plane might crash. Shane proposing shortly after on the dock, stealing his idea. March—the video that wasn't supposed to include them kissing in the background, all over Twitter before they could breathe. The choice: deny everything or lose everything. They'd chosen each other.

April. Game 7, overtime, Ilya scoring the series winner against Shane's team, Shane's teammates accusing him of throwing the game.

May. Shane's thirtieth birthday, the decision to leave Montreal, the engagement announcement.

July. Shane signing with Ottawa, their wedding in the backyard with no chairs and J.J. crying through his entire speech.

Now this. Midnight approaching. Champagne chilling.

They were broken open for the first time, and all before midnight, finally—*finally*—able to do this for real.

“Ten minutes!” someone shouted.

Ilya found Shane in the kitchen, loading the dishwasher because of course he was, even with a house full of guests. Ilya took the plate from his hands and set it on the counter.

“Leave it.”

“There’s like forty plates—”

“Leave it,” Ilya repeated, and pulled Shane toward him by the hem of his shirt.

They stood there for a moment, Shane’s hip against the counter, Ilya’s hands loose on Shane’s waist. The noise of the party filtered in from the living room—music, laughter, voices rising above the rest. Normal sounds. Anya barking with a toy and a new friend by the couches. Happy sounds.

“You okay?” Shane asked, searching Ilya’s face.

“Yes.” Ilya slid his hands up Shane’s sides, felt the warmth of him through the thin fabric of his shirt. “Thinking.”

“About?”

“About how many times I have wanted to kiss you at midnight.”

“You’ve kissed me at midnight plenty of times.”

“I have kissed you at midnight in terrible places, quietly, like crime. I want loud one. With witnesses. In room full of people doing same thing, celebrating new year loudly, like idiots. Like fireworks. I have wanted for years to have this with you.”

Shane’s throat worked. “Yeah?”

“*Every* year actually,” Ilya said, correcting himself. “Since I was nineteen and didn’t know why I wanted it.”

“That’s a lot of years.”

“Ten years of being *very* patient.” Ilya pressed his thumb into the hollow of Shane’s hip, watched Shane’s breath catch. “I am tired of waiting.”

“Good news,” Shane said, leaning in until their mouths were almost touching. “You don’t have to anymore.”

“Wait,” Ilya said in a rare moment of resolve against all the ways Shane made him weak. “I want to wait, wait until...”

“Midnight?”

“Yes.”

“Sounds like *just* enough time for you to help me with a little cleaning before.”

“Cruel man,” Ilya said. “I marry you and immediately you make me clean. I should have read contract.”

Ilya did, however, help, and the minutes passed until they were single digits, and until someone turned up the TV. The Times Square broadcast, voices counting down from sixty. Shane’s fingers found the back of Ilya’s neck, playing with the short hairs there. Ilya could feel Shane’s pulse under his thumb, quick and strong.

Thirty seconds.

They walked back to the living room together, Shane’s hand in his. Everyone was gathering near the TV, couples migrating toward each other, singles refilling drinks. Troy had pulled Harris to his feet. Ryan and Fabian were arm in arm.

Twenty seconds.

Across the room, Shane’s father pulled his wife close. Ilya watched Yuna lean into David’s shoulder, watched them share some private word that made them both smile. Forty-some years of midnights together, of *toshikoshi soba* and champagne toasts and the quiet accumulation of shared time. And... that was their future. Those were their years to come, Ilya hoped as he positioned himself behind Shane, wrapped his arms around his waist, hooked his chin over Shane’s shoulder. Shane leaned back into him.

Ten. Nine. Eight.

Ten years of burning wishes. Ten years of writing Shane’s name on scraps of paper—hotel stationery, napkins, the backs of receipts. Wishing. Wishing. Lighting matches in bathroom stalls during team parties, watching the letters curl and blacken. Dropping ash into champagne, vodka, whatever was available. Swallowing it down before the final chime. Twelve seconds. Twelve swallows. Make the wish part of your bones.

He wasn’t burning anything tonight.

Five. Four. Three.

Shane turned in Ilya’s arms.

Two. One.

It was midnight, finally, and Ilya thought: *I have nothing left to wish for.*

Ilya kissed him.

Shane's mouth opened under his immediately, hands coming up to frame Ilya's face, and Ilya tasted champagne and mint and home. The room erupted around them—cheers, music, fireworks crackling on TV—but Ilya barely heard it. He was too busy cataloging: the faintest scratch of Shane's stubble against his palm, the way Shane's fingers tightened in his hair, the small sound Shane made when Ilya licked into his mouth deeper.

This, Ilya thought. *This, finally, this.*

When they broke apart, Shane was grinning so wide it had to hurt. His eyes were wet.

"Happy New Year," Shane said, a little breathless.

"Happy New Year, *lyubimyy*," Ilya said, and kissed him again because he could, because no one was staring, because Shane was his husband and everyone knew it.

"Get a room!" Troy yelled from across the living room, laughing.

"Is my house," Ilya called back without looking away from Shane. "I have *many* rooms, and all of them for kissing my husband in."

"Oh my god," Shane said, but he was laughing too, pressing his face into Ilya's shoulder the way he did when he was embarrassed and pleased at the same time.

"Watch me. I will demonstrate," Ilya continued, leaning in for a repeat performance, hands sliding down to appreciate the svelte curve of his husband's ass, "I will kiss him in each one starting now—"

By one-thirty, the house had mostly cleared out. Boody helped to clean a little. Troy and Harris were the last to leave, Harris hugging them both and promising to send the cookie recipes he'd brought. Ilya closed the door behind them and turned to survey the damage: empty bottles on every surface, someone's scarf abandoned on the stairs, a cheese plate decimated down to some sad crackers.

"We should clean," Shane said from the couch, making no move to get up.

"We should go to bed."

"We should clean first."

"We clean later. I have priorities; we should go to *bed*," Ilya repeated, crossing to the couch and holding out his hand.

Shane took it, let Ilya pull him to his feet. They stood there in the wreckage of the party, Shane's hand warm in his, and Ilya felt the weight of the year settling over him like snow, as soft and inevitable as the beginning of winter. *Konets*. An ending. *Nachalo*. A beginning. The

documentary that had aired in the fall. The press conference where Shane's voice had shaken but hadn't broken. The wedding in Shane's parents' backyard, J.J. crying during his speech, Hayden drunk and challenging Ilya to arm wrestle, Shane's mother kissing Ilya's cheek and whispering, "Thank you for making him happy."

Spasibo tebe. Thank you, he'd wanted to say, but his throat was too choked up to speak and Russian and English were too hard. Thank you, he wanted to say, for raising someone who could love like this. For not flinching *too* much when Shane brought home a Russian man instead of a nice Canadian girl. For pasta and ice cream bowls and family and for the way she'd held his face in both hands and called him *syn*—son.

"What are you thinking about?" Shane asked.

"That I am very good at marriage."

Shane laughed, the sound bright in the dim room. "You've been married for four months."

"Yes, and I have not fucked it up yet. Statistically impressive."

"The bar is so low."

"And yet, I am clearing it." Ilya tugged Shane closer, until they were chest to chest. "I kissed you at midnight."

"You did."

"In front of everyone."

"Yep."

"And no one cared."

"Well," Shane said, smiling against Ilya's mouth. "I cared."

"Good caring or bad caring?"

"The best caring." Shane kissed him, soft and slow. When he pulled back, his eyes were serious. "I'm really happy."

"Me too," Ilya said. Then, because he couldn't help himself: "Even though you made me invite Dykstra."

"You *like* Dykstra!"

"He is fine, I guess. For a guy who talks too much about his children."

"He brought expensive vodka."

"This is true. He earns pardon." Ilya started walking backward toward the stairs, pulling Shane with him. "Come. We celebrate New Year privately now."

“I thought you were *tired* of celebrating it secretly?”

“Secret? No. But this part, the parts of you naked against the sheets and beneath my hands, I would not share. So privately,” Ilya said, kissing at his neck. “This part is mine.”

Shane was laughing as they climbed the stairs, as Ilya pulled him into their bedroom and kicked the door shut behind them. Laughing as Ilya backed him toward the bed, as they fell together into the mess of blankets. The laughter faded when Ilya’s mouth found the hinge of Shane’s jaw, when his hands slid under Shane’s shirt. Shane’s breath caught, hitching and wonderful. His fingers tangled in Ilya’s hair, pulling him closer, and Ilya could feel Shane’s pulse rabbiting under his lips.

“*Bozhe*,” Ilya murmured against Shane’s throat. He dragged Shane’s shirt up and off, tossed it somewhere that didn’t matter, ignoring the scandalized expression on his husband’s face. Shane’s skin was warm under his palms. Ilya traced the familiar topography—ribs, hipbones, the flat plane of his stomach—and Shane arched into the touch.

“Ilya—”

His name in Shane’s mouth like that, breathless and wanting. Ilya would never tire of it. He kissed down Shane’s sternum, felt Shane’s hands scrabble at his shoulders, heard the small desperate sound Shane made when Ilya’s teeth grazed his hip.

The year turned over into something new. Shane beneath him, skin flushed and freckles dark against the sheets. Shane’s hands pulling at Ilya’s clothes. The heat between them building until there was nothing left but to burn, like wishes, like love.

Nakonets-to. Finally.

Ten years of midnights. Ten years of wanting. And now this—Shane’s fingers digging into Ilya’s shoulders, Shane’s name tasting like spun sugar on Ilya’s tongue, like stardust, like *home*.

Moy. Mine.

Finally, for midnight, for this year, and all the rest.

End Notes

[Bsky](#) | [Tumblr](#) | [My Hollanov fics on AO3](#)

Happy New Year, friends! S Novym Godom! This is my last fic of the year. See you in 2026!

The timeline gets a little nuts in this series, but I tried my best, lol. *This fic uses a work skin to prevent AI-scraping. You may turn it off by clicking 'Hide Creator's Style', which will let you highlight text, but it will affect the formatting slightly!*

Not sure what to say? Comment anxiety? How about...

- ❤️ “I liked/loved it!”
- 🌌 “this wasn't my favorite”
- ✨ “All rooms are for kissing in!”
- 🎉 “Happy new years!”
- 🏒 “dumb hockey boys make me happy”
- 🗡️ “this usually isnt my thing... and yet”
- 💀 “how dare you (affectionate)”

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