

you and me from the night before

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by [placebythering](#)

Summary

“I’m serious. We can’t just—what, you want us to dress up and wander into Times Square like idiots? To celebrate the New Year? In public?”

“See?” Rozanov grins wider. “You already understand concept.”

“You are unbelievable.”

“And you,” Rozanov counters, leaning in just enough to steal Shane’s attention again, “are very boring.”

---Shane and Ilya, in the middle of their will-they won't-they, ring in the New Year together.

Notes

heated rivalry has consumed my life omfg. just read this. it's lowkey ass.

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

December 31, 2016

If there's one thing that Shane is good at, and if hockey has to be taken out of that equation, then it's that he can smile without really meaning it.

It's a skill, perfected over years of press lines and locker room interviews, charity dinners and benefits just like this one where he's introduced less as a person and more like a resumé, like *'Here's Shane Hollander, three-time MVP winner and back-to-back Stanley Cup Champion. Isn't he great? Oh, does he seem overwhelmed? Nah, he's fine, he's just quiet like that.'*

Tonight is no different. The Hilton gleams in gold and white, all crystal chandeliers and floors polished so clean and shiny that Shane swears he could see his reflection from them. Everyone around him is dressed in variations of the same thing: tuxedos, long, sequined gowns, expensive shoes that are made less for standing and more like they're decor. The benefit is in full swing already, which means Shane has been shaking hands for over an hour. Not that it really matters. *It's just work*, he thinks, as he nods at donors and League officials whose names he has already forgotten, whose jokes he keeps laughing at despite not really getting them.

Truthfully, Shane's distraction has nothing to do with the monotony of the event itself. He's thinking about home. *Montreal*. Not in the whole *'it's the holiday and I should be home'* nonsense—it hasn't been like that in years, especially after he got drafted. He's no stranger to spending the holidays alone and far from his parents and family. No, it's more like Shane is anxious in the way that most travelers are anxious. He's supposed to be on a late flight tonight, back home before people take to the streets to celebrate the New Year, sleeping it all through and waking up in his own bed on the first with a quiet Montreal around him.

So Shane likes routine. He likes knowing where he's supposed to be. Sue him.

"Shane Hollander," he hears, and so he turns automatically, smile already in place. Another donor. Another rookie from a different team. Another conversation. Another reminder that he belongs to the League tonight as much as he belongs to himself. Shane listens like the good player that he is, then responds, thanks them for coming, and accepts template-type praises for the season so far.

Well, Shane thinks, *at least there's one consolation in all this*; across the room, smiling just as blankly and perhaps feeling just as miserable, is Ilya Rozanov.

It's no surprise that he's here. All the important people are, and Rozanov, after all, is one of the best hockey players at the moment. And the Raiders are a pretty tough team right now, a top contender for the playoffs and having lost only two games this far into the season. Of course it made sense that Rozanov was also invited.

Looking isn't intentional. It never is. Shane doesn't let himself scan for Rozanov. Doesn't allow his eyes to look for that familiar shape and the even more familiar mop of curls on his ridiculously tall frame. Rozanov is standing by the bar, jacket open, posture loose in a way that looks effortless but Shane knows is actually part of his curated public persona. He's

laughing at something—head tipped back slightly, mouth open, eyes bright. There's some rookies by his side, leaning in too close and hanging on to every word, clearly charmed.

Shane looks away.

Ignore him, he thinks, resisting the pull of Rozanov's gravity, the itch beneath his skin that's urging him to walk forward, go beside him, and see just what is so funny. *Just ignore him, dude. It's fine.* And it is fine. It should be fine. It's nothing. They're not supposed to look like anything to each other here, in this setting, where they're not expected to be anything more than rivals, colleagues, and faces of the League.

The benefit drags on and on and on. Speeches are made. Scott Hunter goes up to the stage to announce the total money raised so far, and everyone claps again, so pleased with themselves and their magnanimity. All throughout, Shane lets the feeling of exhaustion build up inside him. The one he gets when he's being forced to keep his social battery up when, in reality, he's much closer to blowing up than anything else. He checks his watch more than once, anticipation tight in his stomach.

Finally, during a lull in the presentation of the League's events for the next year, Shane excuses himself from the conversation at his table and reaches for his phone with a relief so sharp it almost hurts.

No new messages, great. Shane opens the airline website. Refreshes. The loading wheel feels personal up until the notice appears, in which case it actually becomes personal.

NO AVAILABLE FLIGHTS.

Shane stares at it. Stares at it hard enough while manifesting for the big, bold 'NO' to disappear. It doesn't.

He refreshes again. Then he checks alternate airports. Newark. LaGuardia. Nothing. Just a hard column of the words '*Fully booked*' and '*Delayed*' and '*Cancelled*'. '*Go and spend your New Year's Eve in New York like the rest of the fucking world,*' the site seems to say. '*What did you expect?*'

Really, what did Shane expect anyway? He's the one who didn't book a flight home in advance, but even if he had, the chances of his flight being cancelled or delayed were already very high—this isn't the first time that he's gotten stuck somewhere because of a flight cancellation on New Year's Eve. So he shouldn't have expected shit.

Still, Shane had been looking forward to being in bed before 12 AM. To sleeping in and waking up much later in the morning and lazing around, watching reruns of the Metros' games and then having a late lunch with his parents. Instead, he's hiding in a corner and running through contingency plans in his head. He could try again in the morning, maybe. Extend his hotel reservation or find a new one if necessary. It's not the end of the world, he knows that. But the disruption annoys him all the same.

He exhales slowly, rubbing his thumb against the edge of his phone.

“Is there problem?” A voice asks, close. Way too close for a stranger. Shane looks up, already braced.

Rozanov stands beside him, holding two glasses—champagne, judging by the bubbles. He offers one automatically, expression casual, eyes searching Shane’s face with an attention that makes his pulse jump.

“No,” he says too quickly, then sighs. “Just... looking at flights.”

Rozanov’s mouth twists in understanding. “Ah.”

“They’re all booked,” Shane adds, unnecessarily. “Or not flying. Not just to Montreal. To everywhere, apparently.”

“So what’s the problem?”

“I think my room’s been reserved after tonight, so I have to find a hotel. I’m not sure though. I haven’t really checked.”

Rozanov hums, thoughtful. He takes a sip of his drink. Shane notices, absurdly, the way his wrist flexes. The way the cuff of his shirt peels out from his jacket sleeve.

You need to get a grip, Shane thinks.

Rozanov makes a noise again, and for a second, Shane figures that this is going to be a *thing*. A *moment*, maybe. Rozanov will say something light or something funny—maybe the same joke he said to those rookies from a while ago, and they’ll both laugh and spin a narrative that for tonight, for a good cause, they’ve decided to put their rivalry aside just to have fun.

Instead, Rozanov inclines his head, expression transforming into something more polite. “Excuse me,” he says. “I should speak with someone.” And before Shane could even respond, he has already stepped away, disappearing almost immediately into the dense knot of people ahead.

Shane stands there for a second longer than necessary, champagne glass sweating cold into his palm. He exhales through his nose, then looks down at his phone again, like it might have changed its mind while he wasn’t looking. It hasn’t.

He scrolls through his messages and opens the thread with his mom. He types quickly, thumbs flying at record speed over the screen. ‘*Flights are all booked,*’ he says. ‘*Might have to cancel tomorrow or just move lunch to dinner if I can get on an early afternoon flight. Sorry.*’

Shane stares at the message, reading it thrice, before sending it. The guilt inside of him flares briefly. He’s always hated it when plans were changed. He hates it even more when he’s the reason that the plans have to shift, even when it isn’t his fault.

Love you, he follows up quickly. Her reply won’t come for a while. She’s probably taking a nap or preparing for dinner at his aunt’s, but just sending it helps. Then he pockets the phone

halfway, thumb hovering over the power button. *I should turn it off*, he thinks, *or put it on silent mode*. There's no reason to keep checking. Nothing is going to change. Nothing—

The phone vibrates.

Shane freezes, then pulls it back out, irritation already prickling. He expects a Google alert, maybe an email he doesn't care about. Instead, a familiar '*Lily*' flashes across the screen.

He glances sideways instinctively, even though he knows better. There's no one beside him. Everyone else has turned their attention back to the speech being made on stage. Still, a part of him is compelled to scan the room anyway, eyes sweeping over faces to make sure no one is paying attention. Rozanov isn't among them. Shane doesn't know where he is. He looks back at his phone.

Lily

1721

Shane snorts under his breath. *Figures*. He types back without thinking.

Jane

Really?

The reply comes almost immediately.

Is hotel room number.

I know what it is.

And fuck off.

Presumptuous.

What is that word?

Presumptuous. Is sexy?

Shane closes his eyes for a second, a smile tugging at the corner of his mouth despite himself.

Hey, Hollander.

Presumptuous. Meaning?

Means you're annoying.

It means you're assuming things.

And being inappropriate.

How is room number inappropriate?

Is just room number.

You and I both know what the hotel room number means.

Ah, so you're thinking of sexy things.

No, Hollander.

Is my room for you to stay tonight.

Until you get flight back, yes?

Shane stills, and he doesn't respond right away.

You are still alive, Hollander?

You are thinking of sex, probably.

Who is presumptuous now?

Not me.

Fuck off.

I can get another hotel, it's fine.

You can.

But it is expensive.

And everywhere is booked tonight. I know because Carmichael can't book hotel.

So he's staying with friend.

Also, boring to be alone for New Year.

I don't need an exciting New Year.

You say this.

I do not believe you.

And before you ask, yes, we can also fuck. Just like you thought at first.

I suck your soul through your dick.

Make you sleep very soundly.

Is good idea, yes?

Shane rolls his eyes and huffs quietly. He lifts his head again, scanning the room once more, and this time he spots Rozanov near the edge of the crowd, partly turned away. He's pretending to be absorbed in conversation with someone else, but Shane knows better. He always does.

His phone buzzes again.

Well?

I hate that you assume we're going to fuck.

What if I just want to sleep?

I assume nothing, Hollander.

And I will let you sleep. If sleep is what you want.

You are boring, so maybe that is what you want.

38731.

Is door password. I leave it unlatched.

Shane swallows. He types back slowly and deliberately.

I didn't say yes.

There's a pause this time in Rozanov's reply. Long enough for Shane to feel a small, tight thing curl up in his chest. Long enough that he's starting to think Rozanov would rescind the invitation.

But then—

I know.

Shane stares at the message thread longer than he probably should. Something about it—the lack of pressure, the certainty, the way Rozanov knew that Shane was going to give in without doing much convincing. He stares at the words *'I will let you sleep. If sleep is what you want.'* Lets them settle inside him like an unnerving little thing. He locks his phone and slips it back into his pocket.

Across the room, Rozanov finally looks over. Their eyes meet. Rozanov doesn't smile. Instead, he lifts his glass slightly. A question without words.

Shane exhales. *Fuck it.*

He nods.

The benefit, mercifully enough, ends at six.

Shane checks the time twice, because it feels fake. MLH events don't "end" at six. They formally close it at six, and then people manage to stretch that same closing to about ten more hours, transforming into dinners and drinks and conversations that loop endlessly around the same talking points before finally letting all the trapped people—players and donors and officials alike—go. He's gotten used over the years to leaving these things with a low-grade headache and the vague sense that he's forgotten how to be a real person.

But tonight, people are already drifting towards the exits while the sky outside is still faintly blue. Someone announces that it's the last call for coats. Two staffers are already cleaning up program cards from the table on stage.

Shane doesn't question it. He takes the win.

Goodbyes are said pretty quickly. Shane thanks all the people he has to thank and smiles every single time someone claps him way too hard on the shoulder and tells him to win the cup for the Metros again this season. He politely sidesteps invitations to grab drinks later, the idea of being in a bar the night the year ends sounding so disgusting to him he has to physically fight back the recoil of his body. By the time Shane steps out into the cold, the relief is immediate and physical. *Six o'clock*. He still can't believe it.

He's never been in New York for New Year's Eve before. It's a big deal, he supposes, something about a ball dropping once midnight hits. There's a lot more people out than usual, but it's not so bad yet. Still, Shane can feel a thrum in the air—the restless, shared energy of a million or so people ready to welcome the start of a new year.

His hotel is close. Close enough, at least, that he doesn't bother with a car. Shane walks the few blocks briskly, hands shoved into his pockets, head down against the cool wind. The sidewalks he passes are busy, filled with people bundled up and moving towards the opposite direction of Shane with purpose. Packing at the hotel is a blur of motion. He welcomes the heat in his room and packs his stuff quickly. Clothes get folded, toiletries are zipped away, chargers are gathered and checked twice before he's comfortable enough to leave it alone, sure he hasn't forgotten anything. Then he changes out of his tux, replacing it with jeans, a soft sweater that he likes, and worn *Reeboks* that don't really pair well with the rest of his outfit.

The walk back to the Hilton is just as cold, and this time around there's more people on the streets. Shane checks his watch and sees that it's 7:35. Everyone's probably headed to Times Square now. Shane dreads to even think about what the crowd in that spot looks like. He's already getting overwhelmed by the amount of people he's seeing now.

Finally outside the hotel, Shane pulls out his phone.

Jane

Outside.

Lily

? Okay.

I invite you in, Hollander, not to stay out.

It genuinely amazes me how you never take a break from being an asshole.

You do it so well.

I wish you'd channel that into hockey.

Remember which of us was first draft?

Remember how I won the Stanley?

I won Stanley too.

You are not special.

Try winning it back to back.

People think you are so nice.

But you are real asshole. Worse than me.

Stop standing outside.

Just go up already.

“Fucking *‘just go up’*, he says,” Shane mutters, rolling his eyes as he pushes through the doors. “Like I’m just going to grab something from the lobby. Fucking asshole. Okay.”

He walks inside, his reflection briefly catching in the lobby’s glass mirror—same face, same calm exterior, pushing down the nervousness that’s burning within him. He rides the elevator, pressed shoulder to shoulder with other people. He prays no one would recognize him, keeps his eyes on the numbers lighting up overhead.

What am I supposed to say when I get there? He thinks, then curses with the same internal voice. Shane hates when his brain does this—tries to script things that have never once followed a script. But it’s so insistent. Too loud of a voice. *Thank you for the room. Sorry for imposing. Is this fine? Are you sure? So we’re really not going to fuck? Will it be fine if I just slept?*

Shane swallows. That last part feels irrational, really. He knows the answer. He’s known it for years, in practice if not in words. If he wants to sleep, Rozanov will let him sleep.

The thought hits him solidly, both strange and reassuring. Rozanov has never—not once—pushed him. Or at least, pushed him into anything he didn’t want to do. Their relationship was strange, but he’s never turned a moment into something else without checking. Without

waiting. And even after the moment had turned, Rozanov made sure to check every step of the way if Shane was still fine with it. If Shane was still enjoying himself.

Shane doesn't usually dwell on this. Maybe he should. This quiet foundation in which everything between them rests on.

The elevator dings.

Shane steps out into the hallway, all muffled footsteps on the carpet. *It's quiet*, he thinks, like the hall and where it's all leading up to an isolated space that's been carved out from the rest of the world celebrating below them. He walks to the door at the end of the hall and stops.

For a second, he just stands there.

Then, he types in the code: 38731.

The lock clicks open. He steps inside.

The room smells faintly like something almost perfume-y, like maybe someone was cleaning just mere moments before Shane walked in. The overhead lights are off but all the lamps were on, leaving the room in a soft glow. From where he's standing, Shane can see Rozanov on the bed, leaned back against the headboard, legs stretched out, phone in hand. He looks comfortable in a way that makes Shane acutely aware of... things. Things he can't even really name. Not that he wanted to.

"Hey," Rozanov says, glancing up.

"Hi," Shane replies. He closes the door behind him, setting his bag down carefully on top of the dresser, like he doesn't want to disturb the space. His eyes move automatically, cataloging the room. Particularly the bed, one side of which is clearly Rozanov's—sheets already tangled, a Raiders hoodie draped over the chair, the nightstand cluttered with wrappers, a couple of receipts, and an empty bottle of... something, tipped on its side.

The other side looks untouched. Neat. Made. The nightstand on that side is clean. No stray papers, no mess shoved hastily aside. Just empty. Something flickers to life in Shane's heart.

"I made that side for you," Rozanov says, following his gaze. "Is yours."

"Cool," Shane says, the word coming out softer than he expects. "I... thanks."

Rozanov just shrugs. "Of course."

Shane moves closer, toeing off his shoes and nudging them aside. He sits on the edge of the bed, careful at first, like he's not sure he's allowed to be taking up space. It's awkward. That's really the only word to describe it. The mattress dips slightly beneath him when he finally sits, cursing his own self in his head the whole time. *Act normally*, he thinks. *Don't act like this is the first time you've been in the same room together.*

Rozanov, for his part, goes back to his phone.

For a minute, neither of them speaks. Shane listens to the faint sound of traffic that's reaching them from the window. He flexes his fingers, then stills them against the bedspread.

"So," Rozanov says eventually, still not looking up from his scrolling. "What do you want to do, Hollander?"

Shane blinks. The question is simple. Open and not at all loaded. Like he genuinely wants to know if Shane has any plans.

"I might take a nap," he says honestly. "Or just... sleep, I guess. All the way through until early morning when I can start checking flights again."

Rozanov purses his lips, then nods. "Okay."

And that's it. No hesitation. No disappointment. No hidden meaning.

Shane studies him, searching for something else—anything else, really. Especially since Rozanov did offer to suck Shane's dick some hours ago after he offered for him to stay in his hotel room for the night. And also considering the fact that historically, whenever they were together in a hotel room, Shane always ended up getting fucked six ways to Sunday and leaving very, *very* sore a mere few hours after—to his annoyance and Rozanov's cocky pleasure.

But nothing happens. Rozanov keeps on scrolling through his phone, only occasionally stopping to type something and then resuming with his scrolling. Perfectly content, as if there was nothing else in the world he'd rather be doing.

It hits Shane then, with a surprising clarity—he hadn't realized how much he'd been prepping himself for an explanation. How ready he was to argue and justify himself, to explain why sleep sounded good, and to apologize for not wanting to do more that night. The absence of the pressure leaves him a little unsteady. *But God, does it feel good.*

"You don't mind?" Shane still asks before he can stop himself. Rozanov looks up at him, confusion on his face.

"Why would I?"

Shane shrugs, uncomfortable. "I don't know. I just—"

Rozanov's expression softens. "Hollander, is fine. You can do whatever you want. Sleep, order takeout, jump off balcony for all I care."

"Rude."

"I'm serious. Don't worry about me."

Ah, fuck, Shane thinks. An eerily familiar warmth—one he feels only when Rozanov is around—begins to bloom from his heart, spreading through his muscles and coaxing him to relax. He nods, staring down at his hands. "Thanks," he murmurs.

Rozanov hums, clearly satisfied, and goes back to his phone.

Another quiet stretch passes. Shane shifts his weight, leaning back on the headboard to stare up at the ceiling. He sinks his body further into the mattress, glancing over at Rozanov. "What are you going to do?" Shane asks eventually. Rozanov looks at him, biting the inside of his cheek before shrugging.

"Probably nothing. Sit here. Maybe watch bad show from hotel TV or something. Scroll until my brain turns off."

Shane smiles. "How boring."

"I am exciting man, excuse me," Rozanov raises his brow. "If anyone here is boring, is you. You alone. Most boring man in Canada—no, the world."

"Okay, okay," Shane laughs. "I get it."

They sit there for another beat. Something restless begins to stir in Shane's chest, a mild pressure and a tentative *want*.

"Rozanov."

"Hmm?"

"What if," he starts, then stops. Rozanov looks over again, a patient look on his face.

"What if, what? I don't read minds Hollander, I already told you this before."

"What if we did something?" Shane asks. "I mean. Not—obviously," he gestures vaguely, though he's not sure about what. "Not anything big. Just... something, I guess."

Rozanov considers him for a moment. "We don't have to."

"I know," Shane replies quickly. "I'm not saying we do. I'm just—what if I want to?"

"Then, okay."

Shane swallows. "But?"

"But I guess it has to be something we can do here, yes?" Rozanov says, looking around. "Outside is impossible."

"Because of the ball drop."

"Yes."

Shane hums. He stares at the floor, then back at Rozanov. "I have an idea," he whispers.

Rozanov lifts an eyebrow. "I am listening."

Shane leans in and kisses him.

There's no rush. No careful hesitation. His mouth brushes Rozanov's first, just a soft press.

For a heartbeat, Rozanov is still. The surprise is there, evidently. Shane can feel it in the pause, in the way Rozanov's breath catches just slightly, but it doesn't last. He exhales, a quiet sound against Shane's lips, and then he's kissing him back, like his body knew what to do before his brain caught up. The phone slips from his hand and lands somewhere behind him on the bed, forgotten completely.

Rozanov's hand finds Shane's waist, warm and solid through the fabric of his sweater. The contact sends a low, steady pulse through Shane. He shifts closer without thinking, knees pressing into the mattress, the space between them dissolving entirely. The kiss deepens. Rozanov tilts his head slowly, giving Shane room to follow. Their mouths move together with a practiced ease. Shane feels the faint scrape of stubble along his jaw, the warmth of Rozanov's breath, the way his hand tightens at Shane's waist, around his *neck*, like he's making sure he's really there.

Shane's fingers curl into the front of Rozanov's shirt, bunching the fabric. It's not a grab so much as a need for something to hold on to, something to tether him there in that hotel room. He feels Rozanov smile against his mouth, just barely, like he knows exactly what the gesture means. All of Shane's awareness narrows down to Rozanov; how intoxicating it is to be touching him, holding him, just being near him.

It's Rozanov that pulls him back, eventually, breathing heavily as he rests his forehead against Shane's. Shane keeps his eyes closed for a moment longer, letting the feeling settle, letting it exist. He presses one last kiss against the bridge of Rozanov's nose.

When he opens his eyes, Rozanov is already looking at him.

"Would've been nice, though," Shane whispers, breath warm between them, "watching the ball drop. I've never been."

Rozanov smiles. "We can."

Shane exhales a laugh. "People would see us."

"Yes."

"And they'd notice. Us, together."

"We can wear disguises," Rozanov says, smile unwavering.

Shane scoffs automatically. "Very funny."

But Rozanov isn't laughing. Shane pulls back just enough to look at him properly. Takes in the glint in his eyes and the slight raise of his brow and realizes—"Oh, you're... serious."

Rozanov's smile widens.

"Absolutely not."

Rozanov's mouth curves into something pleased and infuriating to Shane's senses. "Why not?" He asks, like pure bullshit didn't just fall from his mouth.

"Because," Shane says, gesturing vaguely between them like it's supposed to be obvious because it *is*. "That's insane. In public?"

"No," Rozanov replies calmly. "Is not insane. It will be fun."

Shane scoffs. "You always say that and then after you say that something goes terribly, horrifyingly wrong."

Rozanov presses a hand to his chest in mock offense, like the asshole he is. "Ah, I am wounded, Hollander."

"I'm serious. We can't just—what, you want us to dress up and wander into Times Square like idiots? To celebrate the New Year? In *public*?"

"See?" Rozanov grins wider. "You already understand concept."

"You are unbelievable."

"And you," Rozanov counters, leaning in just enough to steal Shane's attention again, "are very boring."

Shane gapes at him. "Excuse me?"

"Oh, look at me, I am Shane Hollander from shitty Metros team filled with shitty Canadians," Rozanov says, a poor, *poor* imitation of Shane's accent. *"I follow rules. I go to bed early. I drink water."*

Water? "I—" Shane sputters. "What does that even have to—this is not—I am *not* boring. This has nothing to do with being *boring*."

"You seem offended."

"Oh fuck you. We'd get recognized."

"By who?"

"Everyone."

"No one," Rozanov corrects. "Everyone tonight will be fucking wasted. And cold. And screaming. Americans are very loud and stupid. Tourists are just as loud and stupid."

Shane exhales through his nose, in disbelief that he's even entertaining this. "Okay, even if—*even if*, don't smile yet, Rozanov—I were to entertain this for a second, where would we even get disguises?"

Rozanov tilts his head, thinking. "We already have them, yes?"

“We... what?”

“You have ugly beanie, I have beautiful hat,” Rozanov says, counting on his fingers. “Scarf. Gloves. Sunglasses, and I know you have two pairs.”

“Those are not disguises, Rozanov. Congratulations for listing out winter clothing.”

“Is winter disguise!”

Shane rubs a hand over his face. “People will still know.”

“They will not,” Rozanov says. “No one is going to be looking for Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander at Times Square on New Year’s Eve. That would be stupid.”

“That feels exactly like where they’d look,” Shane argues back weakly.

Rozanov shakes his head. “No one will be looking. We’d be careful.”

Shane stills.

“The people who know we are here, they’d expect us to be somewhere quiet, yes?” Rozanov continues, voice much softer now. “Or not together at all.”

Shane lets out a breath. He looks away. “You really think this is a good idea?”

Rozanov cups his cheek, then shrugs. “I think it is one night.”

“It’s never just one night with you.”

“Please?”

Shane tilts his head. “Okay,” he says cautiously. “Say we do this. Say we go out. Someone might still recognize us even if our faces are mostly hidden.”

“Probably. But so many people tonight, maybe they just hallucinated Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov.”

“What if they hear our voices?”

“Many accents in New York. America is melting pot.”

“And what if someone gets bold enough to ask our names?”

“Fake names.”

Shane blinks. “Of course you already thought of that.”

“Obviously.”

“Absolutely not,” Shane says again, though there’s less heat in his voice now.

Rozanov leans back against the headboard, studying him. “Then what do you suggest, Mister *‘Absolutely Not’*?”

Shane opens his mouth. Closes it. Thinks. *Fuck*. “I don’t have another idea,” he admits. Rozanov’s triumphant smile almost makes Shane want to punch him.

“Exactly.”

“Fuck off,” Shane rolls his eyes, but there’s a smile in his mouth that’s betraying him. “Fine. Hypothetically, what fake names?”

“*Lily and Jane*.”

Shane stares at him. Then, “Oh fuck you. No. No, abso—”

“Do not say those words again, Hollander, I will murder you.”

“We can’t use Lily and Jane!”

“And why not?”

“You know why not.”

“No one in here would give a fuck,” Rozanov says, looking at Shane like he’s the crazy one. “And even if they do, we won’t matter to them in seconds. I told you, so many people in city tonight.”

Shane snorts. “You’re fucking ridiculous.”

“You have said this already. Isn’t it nice how I can make you laugh, Hollander?”

Yeah, Shane thinks, though he does not say it. Instead, “Hard no on *Lily and Jane*. You’re not changing my mind.”

Rozanov’s gaze flicks from Shane’s mouth, then back to his eyes. “Are you sure?”

Shane hesitates, trying not to squirm. That half-second is all Rozanov needs. “You have better names?” He asks. Shane thinks. Tries. Comes up just as blank as earlier.

“No.”

“Then Lily and Jane it is,” Rozanov says decisively. “They will be coming out tonight.”

“Oh my God, I can’t believe I’m agreeing to this.” Shane groans.

“You are not agreeing,” Rozanov clarifies, as if he really needed to. “You are surrendering.”

“You wore me down.”

“You are easy to wear down.”

Shane huffs out a laugh despite himself. “Don’t push it.”

Rozanov leans in, close enough that Shane feels the warmth from his skin again, that stupid, familiar pull. “You like it when I push.”

Shane’s breath stutters. “That’s not—”

Rozanov kisses him before he can finish.

This kiss is deeper immediately, much more than the one earlier. Shane responds like he’s thirsty, like he’s gone on for too long without Rozanov’s kiss, slightly desperate in his movement. His hands slide into Rozanov’s hair, tugging just enough for Rozanov to moan into the kiss, pleased, his hands firm at Shane’s back. They kiss like this for a while, like they have all the time in the world.

“This is ridiculous,” Shane says again after he’s pulled back to breathe. He presses his nose against the apple of Rozanov’s cheek, inhaling his smell; the faint perfume and the scent of soap. “We’re going to look ridiculous.”

“Yes,” Rozanov smiles against his skin. “We will.”

“I’m serious. We’re going to stand out, probably.”

Rozanov pulls back just enough to look at him, eyes bright with laughter. “Hollander.”

“Rozanov.”

“It is New Year in New York.”

“So?”

“Everyone outside will look fucking ridiculous,” Rozanov says. “More ridiculous than us. I promise. Is very stupid place full of stupid people.”

Shane stares at him for a beat. Then he laughs, real and unguarded and bursting out of him before he can stop it. The sound surprises them both. Shane presses a hand to his mouth, shaking his head as it fades. He leans in, presses one last lingering kiss on Rozanov’s lips, who beams when Shane pulls back. “Okay. Fine. You win. Let’s go.”

Rozanov’s smile could light up the whole room.

Lily

Where are you?

Jane

I got us food.

Well, some snacks, at least.

Where are YOU?

I saw cute dog. Stopped.

I am in front of shop. Victoria's Secret.

I always wondered what the secret is.

Hollander there's red lacy bra here.

Would look good on you.

Shane is going to kill him.

Fuck off.

I think I know where you are but I am not going back there.

Please just go to where I am.

You will not come here?

To try red lacy bra on?

I make sure they have your size.

If you're not here in five minutes I'm throwing your food away.

Shane closes his phone, refusing to give Rozanov more ammo to piss him off. He's standing at the edges of the crowd, though there's still a lot of people where he is. There's two steaming paper cups of fish cakes in his hand, the heat bleeding through the thin cardboard and into his gloves. The air is brutal, sneaking past the layers on his face and making his cheeks sting. And he can't see shit, either. The dark glasses he's wearing fog slightly every time he exhales, and most of the lower half of his face is buried beneath a thick scarf he borrowed from Rozanov, which smells faintly of wool and cologne. The world around him has been reduced to this pocket of excitement and celebration—just neon signs, gigantic LED screens playing ad after ad and countdown graphics. People surge past Shane in every direction, mostly headed towards the center.

It's overwhelming. Loud. Completely unmanageable. On any other day, Shane would already be incredibly annoyed and shutting down. But tonight is different, apparently. Tonight he has Rozanov for company, and, for the first time ever, no one is looking at him.

Really. No one is. The realization hits him slowly, almost suspiciously. Shane has waited all night—from the moment he and Rozanov stepped out into the streets up until now—for the familiar prickle at the back of his neck, the sense that eyes are tracking him, that someone is going to recognize the shape of his face or the sound of his voice.

But it never did come. Again, one of the wins he'd take today.

Two hours to midnight, give or take, and Times Square is already a living organism in its own right. Police barriers funnel people into corrals. Music blasts from multiple directions. Every few seconds, someone shouts the time like it's some revelation, and every single time the crowd cheers in response. Shane breathes in through his nose. Closes his eyes for a while.

He thinks, unexpectedly, of his grandmother's house in Ottawa.

The busiest New Year's Eve he can remember is still the furthest from this. Loud, yes, and so different. He remembers his cousins shrieking in the backyard, trying to kill each other with snowballs, his uncle yelling at them to watch the windows. He remembers his grandmother watching from the porch, insisting that everyone eat something so that they don't start the year hungry. Shane had been maybe thirteen, bundled up and laughing so hard his sides hurt, snow melting down the back of his collar. His mom had berated him for that later on, and he eventually got sick, but it's a good memory. One of his best, perhaps.

"Jane," a voice beside him says, cutting through the noise. Shane turns, heart jumping, and there Rozanov is.

Or, for tonight, *Lily*.

Rozanov's face is just as hidden as Shane's, wrapped in a scarf that covers his mouth and nose. Only his eyes are visible, bright and amused and crinkling at the corners. Shane lets out a breath, a soft smile on his face.

"Lily," he says, pitching his voice a little different, a little lower than usual. It feels stupid, but it also feels good. Rozanov steps closer, hands shoved into his coat pockets.

"Jane. I see you have survived crowd without me."

"Barely," Shane replies sarcastically. He lifts the cups in his hands slightly, the steam mostly gone now because of the cold and how long Rozanov took to get to him. "Here. Food."

Rozanov's eyes light up. "Ah. You are hero, Jane. My favorite."

"Don't be dramatic," Shane says, trying not to blush and thankful for the fact that his face is mostly covered. "It's just fish cakes and soup."

"Still hero," Rozanov insists.

They stand there for a moment, suspended in their own small bubble while New York moves on around them. Shane, once again, looks around. Scans faces. Waits for someone to finally, *finally* recognize them.

Nothing. Still nothing. No one is paying attention and no one is watching. *Fuck.*

“Okay,” Shane sighs. “You win.”

“Hmm? About what?”

“This. You’re right. No one cares.”

Rozanov hums, pleased. “I told you.”

“Please don’t.”

“I. Told. You.”

They move back to the food cart, stepping out of the crowd and the flow of people. Shane pulls his scarf down, just enough to take a bite, careful not to expose too much of his face. The fish cakes are hot and salty and comforting. He exhales slowly, letting the warmth spread its way through his body.

“Is good?” Rozanov asks.

Shane nods. “Yeah. Want some of mine?”

It’s an unthinking offer, and Rozanov doesn’t answer verbally. He just leans in, dipping his head toward Shane’s cup and taking a bite from the skewer without ceremony. Shane startles, then laughs quietly, the sound muffled by his scarf.

“You could have agreed properly.”

Rozanov speaks while chewing. “I did. With my eyes.”

“I just don’t think that’s how it works.”

“Worked for me,” Rozanov says, stealing another bite.

Shane just shakes his head, snorting and smiling at Rozanov’s antics. He eats another piece, then another. Around them, the crowd continues to grow. Someone nearby yells something about sunglasses with the incoming year written on them. Shane wonders how the year 2017 would work.

“So,” he says, eventually, glancing around. “Is this all we’re gonna do?”

“Yes.”

“Standing in Times Square to eat fish cakes?”

“Oh, is only for now, Hollander. Later, we scream.”

“Pass,” Shane replies immediately. Rozanov laughs, the sound swallowed by the noise around them. “And don’t call me that.”

“Fine. *You* will scream, *Jane*.”

“I absolutely will not.”

“I did not mean here. Could not be here. In the bedroom, later, definitely.”

“When have I ever screamed while having sex with you?”

“First time for everything,” Rozanov shrugs, and Shane gets annoyed by the sudden spike of pleasure that rises within him. *Please get a grip*, he thinks to himself. *Genuinely, get a grip*.

They fall into an easy conversation, after, talking between bites. Rozanov asks about what he was thinking of earlier before he found him—because he looked distant, apparently—so Shane tells him about his cousins and the holidays spent with them in their grandmother’s house. Rozanov listens, eyes intent and hanging on to every word, asking questions every now and then. Mostly, he just teases Shane.

“I cannot imagine you... what is it, throwing snowballs?”

“Yeah.”

Rozanov nods. “Yeah, no. You are too polite and too boring.”

“I was not polite. And I was not boring. I had very good aim and all my cousins wanted me on their team.”

“Sure.”

“No, really,” Shane insists. “Ask my cousin, Mark.”

“I will,” Rozanov replies solemnly. “I will call him.”

“You don’t have his number.”

“I will find it.”

“Fuck you.”

“Oh, no thank you,” Rozanov laughs. “Also, good aim is big lie. You are not that good.”

Shane shakes his head. “I have two Stanley Cups to your one.”

“See, you keep bringing that up and you will jinx it. You will never win Cup again.”

Shane laughs, then says nothing else. He’s surprised by how easy this all feels. How normal. Domestic, even. It should scare him, but he’s not thinking about anything right now aside from how nice it is to just be here, existing side by side with Ilya Rozanov.

When the cups are empty, Shane crumples them and looks around for a trash can. Rozanov takes one from him without comment and tosses it neatly into a bin several feet away. It goes

in, which annoys Shane. *Whatever.* “Show-off,” he mutters, rolling his eyes. Rozanov just spreads his arms like he’s done something truly remarkable.

“Natural talent.” He says. He reaches out then, fingers curling around the sleeve of Shane’s coat, and tugs gently. “Come,” he says. “We walk.”

Shane lets himself be pulled. They move deeper into the crowd, Rozanov leading with confidence, weaving through gaps with a practiced ease, despite the fact that Shane knows this is also the first time that Rozanov is spending New Year’s Eve here. Maybe they have celebrations like this in Russia. Maybe Rozanov has spent the end of the year like this multiple times before. He asks the other man just as much.

“In crowd like this? This big? Never. New Year in Russia is more private affair.”

“How so?”

“We spend it with family. Friends. Most crowded I think is when I spent New Year in apartment that had fifty people in it.”

“Fifty?”

“A little over, under.”

Shane whistles. “That’s a lot of people.”

“Eh, is normal.”

“What would you guys do?”

“Well... We eat this salad. *Салат 'Мимоза'*”

“Sorry, what?”

“*Салат 'Мимоза'*. Is salad. Made from cheese and mayonnaise and fish and—”

“I’m sorry, *what?*”

“I get same reaction every time from other people. This is funny. Is okay, *Jane*, is not for you.”

Shane rolls his eyes, “Okay, aside from eating your suspicious salad, what else is it that you guys do?”

“We drink, we eat *other food*—so don’t look at me like I’m crazy. Mostly we talk, wait for the fireworks. We don’t do big crowds much, but small room filled with people is just the same as big city with many people, yes?”

“I guess,” Shane concedes. “In a way. Hey, wh—”

A phone rings. The sound cuts through the crowd's noise. Rozanov startles, then grimaces. "Sorry," he says, already reaching into his pocket. He pulls his phone out, glances at the screen, and his expression flickers—annoyance, at first. Then something else replaces it entirely: recognition and genuine happiness at the same time.

"Oh," Rozanov says, warmth oozing from his voice. He looks at Shane apologetically. "One moment, Jane."

Before Shane can respond, Rozanov brings the phone to his ear.

"Света, привет," he starts in Russian, rolling his eyes. "Ага, ага, с Новым Годом тебе тоже."

Shane understands none of the words, though he does keep a close eye on the way Rozanov's expressions change. The way his scarf has been pulled down, so Shane can watch his lips move and curl around the words.

"Не, меня не будет в Бостоне сегодня. Не будет до завтрашнего дня, наверно." Rozanov continues. Then he sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Неа, я не один. Да, с Jane. Заткнись, а? Не надо надо мной смеяться."

Shane startles at the mention of 'Jane'. He wonders what the context of that was. If he should be nervous. If he's being made fun of, already the butt of a joke he didn't know was happening at his expense. But Rozanov isn't cruel like that, and he doesn't seem to be laughing right now. If anything, he looks... fond. Closer to that, at least.

"Да, да, мне очень повезло что она тоже в Нью-Йорке. А? Нет, ты че, я не дам ей трубку, ты обалдела? Оставь меня в покое. Оставь её в покое."

Rozanov laughs, then turns away slightly, angling his body to hear better, but he doesn't fully retreat from Shane's space. In fact, he seems to be looking at Shane more, smiling as he does, but it's not a teasing smile. Not the smug smirk he flashes on the ice. It's... softer. Realer. It feels more like something private, just between him and Rozanov alone.

"Че ты говоришь, описать ее? Зачем? ... Ну, она очень красивая. Волосы черные, короткие. Ниже чем я, но это само собой разумеется. Большие карие глаза. И веснушки. Света, у нее столько много веснушек, вообще передел. Но мне они так нравятся. Они так хорошо на ней выглядят. Она немного раздражает, но че поделать?"

There's that laugh again, and Shane feels a tightness in his chest before he could help himself. *You're jealous*, the stupid, irrational voice in his head whispers. He shifts his weight, scolding himself immediately. *Don't be stupid*, he thinks. First of all, Shane has no right. Second of all, it could be anyone. A friend. A family member. Someone calling back home. It could be... his niece. Or someone. Anyone. *Fuck*.

"Да, мне нравится когда она ко мне пристает," Rozanov continues, blissfully unaware of Shane's internal spiral, voice as animated as ever, his gestures getting wilder and wilder. "Потому-что! Это значит она о мне думает. Света! Тебе, че, не нравится когда

*красивые мужчины о тебе думают? Ладно, ладно, что еще... У неё толстая жопа. Мне очень нравится когда – ты ж сама просила описание. Не, погоди, че ты смеешься? Это ты надо мной смеешься? Блин, отстань, а?—*Sorry, Jane, have to take this call elsewhere.”

Shane blinks. “Huh? Sorry.”

Rozanov gives him another apologetic look, this time more earnest, and steps back, already turning away as he lifts the phone again.

“I will be back,” he says, then adds, quieter, “I promise. Stay.”

Shane nods. “That’s okay. Take your time.”

Rozanov only hesitates for a second, like he wants to say more but decides against it, before disappearing into the crowd. Shane is left standing alone. The space Rozanov leaves behind feels colder than the air.

Shane rocks back on his heels, then forward again, unsure what to do with his hands. So he shoves them into his pocket, then pulls out his phone instead, grateful for something to occupy himself with while Rozanov is out there entertaining himself with—*enough. Okay, dude, you really need to stop.*

He hums under his breath, tunelessly, barely aware of it. He opens his messages, opens the one from his mom. *‘That’s okay, baby. Take your time. Happy almost New Year.’*

Shane smiles, then types back quickly. *‘Happy New Year to you too. Don’t wait up.’* He hesitates a bit, then adds a heart before hitting send. Next, he opens his camera and lifts his phone higher, snapping a photo of the crowd and the screens and the ball they’re going to drop in the distance. There’s a glowing countdown behind it, signifying that there’s only an hour left before the New Year. Shane sends it to the family group chat, captioned with *‘Guess where I am’*. Almost immediately, his cousins start responding with a flood of shocked emojis and stupid teasing.

He’s just about to turn his phone off when it buzzes, and another message thread jumps to the top. Shane smiles.

Lily

I am missing you again, Hollander.

Somehow.

I told you not to leave spot.

Jane

I didn’t leave my spot!

Just walk backwards from the direction you came. You’ll see me.

I'm wearing a black coat.

Backwards? What?

And everyone is wearing black coat.

I know 🤔

Once again, you are asshole.

You know you are short, Hollander?

I don't know if it's you I am looking at right now.

Or another short guy.

Fuck you.

I'm not even that short.

You're only taller than me by like, three inches.

Also, I'll leave. Don't try me.

Noooo Hollander don't leave.

Is fine, I find you.

I would know if it's you.

Stay put, okay?

I have big surprise for you.

How big?

Bigger than my dick.



You know what. Fine. That was my fault.

I set myself up for that one.

See how you are not denying it.

“I am going to kill him. I am so going to kill him,” Shane mumbles as he puts his phone back in his pockets. “I don’t even care about the charge. I am going to kill him.”

“Kill who?”

“Jesus, fuck—Roz—”

“Not my name.”

“*Lily*. Please do not do that.”

“You are very hard to find, *Jane*. But here you are.”

“Here I am,” he says, a little more relief in his voice than he intends. Rozanov smiles at him, that same soft smile from earlier, and shrugs out of his coat just enough to adjust the scarf wrapped around his throat. “I told you I would be back.”

“I didn’t say you wouldn’t be,” Shane replies.

“No,” Rozanov agrees easily. “But you probably thought it.”

Shane rolls his eyes, not giving that the satisfaction of a direct response. Instead, he pivots into something stupider. “Who was it?”

Rozanov arches a brow, amused. “You want to know?”

“Casually,” Shane says, aiming for disinterest and missing it by a mile. “As *Jane*, asking *Lily*.”

“A friend,” Rozanov replies simply. He watches Shane’s face closely as he says it, like he’s looking for something. Then, lightly, almost teasing, he adds. “Don’t be jealous, *Jane*.”

“I’m not,” Shane says immediately. The speed of the answer makes Rozanov grin wider.

“Mhmm,” he hums. “Nothing to be jealous about, *Jane*. I am with you right now, am I not?”

Shane doesn’t respond. He doesn’t need to. Rozanov’s words settle somewhere warm and solid in his heart, and he lets it sit there. Safe.

They stand for a moment, shoulder to shoulder, letting the crowd shoulder past them to get closer to the ball drop. The air feels much sharper now, charged with anticipation. Shane checks his phone—less than twenty minutes to midnight.

Rozanov glances around, then reaches out, fingers closing gently around Shane’s wrist. “Come.”

“Where?” Shane asks, surprised as Rozanov starts guiding him through the crowd.

“Out.”

“Out where? We’re not going to get a good view if we leave now.”

Rozanov looks back at him over his shoulder. “I have surprise,” he says. “Like I told you.”

Shane prepares to open his mouth to argue, then closes it again. He lets himself be pulled, weaving through people, apologizing whenever they bump into someone, ducking under an

arm here and there. Eventually, they reach a slightly quieter place on the road. It's still loud, still crowded, but it's less stifling. Less claustrophobic. Rozanov stops and turns to face him.

"Okay," Shane says. "What's the surprise?"

Rozanov grins and reaches into his coat pocket. Then the other one. And then, with a flourish that's entirely too theatrical—and almost too uncharacteristic, but Shane knows who Rozanov really is—he pulls out two sparklers.

Shane blinks. "You're kidding."

Rozanov holds them up like trophies. "Ta-da!"

"Where did you even get those?"

"Someone was giving them away," Rozanov says. "While I was on call. I got two."

Shane laughs. "Of course you did."

"You do not like?" Rozanov asks, suddenly uncertain.

"No," Shane replies quickly, shaking his head. "No, I do. I just—I don't know. You're kind of unbelievable."

"Thank you," Rozanov hums, pleased.

Shane steps closer, tugging Rozanov by the sleeve of his coat, sparklers held carefully away from them. A minute before midnight, Rozanov fishes a lighter out of his pocket. Shane must be making a face, because Rozanov immediately starts scoffing and rolling his eyes. He flicks the lighter open, flame blooming to life. "Do not start with your shit, *Jane*. Do not tell me to stop smoking, please," he pouts. *Pouts*. "Do not ruin this beautiful night I am having."

"I wasn't going to say anything," Shane smirks. "But now that you mentioned it, that might be your resolution."

"I will make resolution to not listen to you."

"Good luck with that."

Rozanov lights Shane's sparkler first, holding the flame steady until it catches. It sputters, then flares to life, throwing sparks into the cold night air. Shane grins, watching the light crackle and dance. Rozanov lights his own next, and for a while they just stand there, two grown men in poor disguises, holding sparklers in the middle of New York as it prepares to welcome the new year.

"This is ridiculous," Shane says, just a touch too fond.

"Yes," Rozanov agrees. "But good ridiculous."

Shane nods, not having enough words anymore. He's having fun—real fun. He watches the sparks fly, listens to the distant chattering as the final minutes turn into the final seconds.

Mostly, though, he watches Rozanov. The way his face lights up under the glow of all of the lights. The way he smiles, wide and beaming, joy written plainly across his sharp features. He looks younger like this. Freer. Beautiful. So *beautiful*. Shane aches with a longing so strong he could do nothing else but turn away. And maybe admit, even just to himself, that he's really glad he let Rozanov drag him out here. That he let himself be talked into this absurdity.

That he said yes. Now, and all of those years ago.

The countdown starts, voices rising around them.

“Ten!”

“Nine!”

“Eight!”

Shane barely hears it all. His eyes are still on Rozanov.

“—Three! Two!”

When the crowd erupts—when the clock strikes midnight, the year turns, and the city explodes into sound and light and noise—Shane doesn't think. He just moves. He steps closer and pulls Rozanov in, pressing a quick, faint kiss to his mouth.

It's brief. Almost shy with how chaste it is. Gone before it can be anything solid. It's enough, though. Enough for where they are. Enough to make the moment a *moment* without having to commit too much.

Rozanov freezes, momentarily surprised, the sparkler forgotten in his hand. Then, his free hand comes up, cupping Shane's cheek gently, thumb brushing along his jaw.

“What did you do that for?” Rozanov asks softly.

Shane sighs, heart pounding. “Tradition,” he says. “You have to kiss someone for New Year.”

“For what?” Rozanov asks, still holding him close.

“I don't know,” Shane replies, just the tiniest bit desperate. They're in public. They're not Jane and Lily. They're standing, face to face, Rozanov's hand on his cheek, Shane's on the lapels of his coat. They're not supposed to be doing this.

There's nowhere else in the world that Shane would rather be.

“That's okay.”

“It's for good luck, I think,” Shane continues, finally. “For a good year ahead.”

Rozanov smiles at that, something sure finding its home on his face. “Well,” he says quietly, words for Shane alone. “Now I think I will have one.”

January 1, 2017

Shane wakes to a dull pressure behind his eyes, announcing itself before he’s even fully conscious. He groans softly, squeezing his eyes shut again to test the limits of his denial. He loses, eventually—the headache doesn’t go away. It’s what he deserves for having champagne at four in the morning.

The hotel room is washed in light. They forgot to fully draw the curtains closed, so it’s pulled back just enough to let that cold morning glare in. Shane doesn’t move right away, letting all his senses come back to him slowly. The first to return is touch, as he becomes hyperaware of the warmth beside him; the weight of another body pressed close. His headache recedes a notch, shoved aside by something gentler.

Right.

Shane turns his head slightly, careful not to disturb the other man, and just... stares. Rozanov is sprawled on his back, one arm flung above his head, the other resting loosely between them. His hair is a mess, curls flattened on one side and sticking up at odd angles on the other. There’s a faint crease between his brows, like he’s frowning in his sleep. Shane resists the urge to smoothen it with the palm of his finger. Kiss it away, maybe.

Instead, Shane memorizes him. Tracing the lines of his face with his eyes and filing what he sees in the part of his head where he keeps all things about Rozanov: the slope of his jaw. The faint shadow of stubble. The way that the light catches on his cheekbone, turning it almost gold.

The night before comes back mostly in pieces, though Shane can string the story together just fine. They left Times Square sometime after three, ears ringing and feet aching, both of them laughing too much and too loudly in the back of the taxi. He remembers how they ducked into the hotel lobby, scarves pulled so high their eyes were almost covered, giggling like idiots as if anyone at that hour would care.

Then they had that stupid champagne, lukewarm and flat by the time they opened it. They shared it anyway, sitting on the edge of the bed, passing it back and forth while talking about the rest of the season and making fun of all the other teams that aren’t theirs. And then, ridiculously, they ended up dancing without music. Just Rozanov’s hands at his waist, guiding him slowly and steadily despite the alcohol in both their systems. Shane, distinctly, remembers resting his forehead against Rozanov’s shoulder.

Shane swallows against the emotion suddenly bubbling right at his throat. In truth, and he can admit this now because Rozanov is still asleep and unable to scrutinize him, he was afraid of

last night ending. He doesn't know when he'll get to see Rozanov again, especially like this. Not really. Their lives don't lend themselves to mornings like this. Won't ever, probably.

So Shane does what he does best. He lingers. Commits the sight of Rozanov to memory so he'd have something to go back to later. And, before he can talk himself out of it, Shane leans in and presses a kiss to the corner of Rozanov's jaw.

It's gentle. Rozanov stirs at the contact anyway.

"Mm," he hums, his voice heavy with sleep. He turns his head towards Shane, lashes fluttering as his eyes open. It takes him a few beats to focus, but when he does, a small smile spreads across his face.

"Good morning."

"Good morning, Hollander. Give me proper morning kiss."

Shane huffs. "Morning breath."

Rozanov squints. "We have done worse things than kissing with morning breath."

"That's... unfortunately true," Shane replies, and he's already leaning closer again. Rozanov's hand comes up immediately, sliding into Shane's hair to pull him closer. He kisses Shane, starting out soft and progressively getting deeper as Shane starts making noises. Shane, for his part, melts into the kiss, headache distant and forgotten in light of recent developments in the morning.

They break apart after a while, long enough that Shane is able to take a deep breath.

"You okay?" Rozanov asks, eyes still sleepy.

"Yeah," Shane replies. "Just tired, I guess. A bit."

"You can sleep more."

Shane considers it for a moment. Then he shakes his head, tossing the thought into the bin in his mind. Instead, he climbs fully on top of Rozanov, knees bracketing his hips, palms braced on either side of his shoulders. Rozanov laughs softly, surprised and pleased at the same time, hands slotting themselves automatically to Shane's waist like they belong there.

"Well," Rozanov drawls out. "This is different."

"New Year's Day present."

"How lucky of me."

Rozanov goes back to kissing him, pressing their bodies even closer. They kiss for a while. For a long time. Up until clothes are shed and they're skin to skin, Shane still perched on top of Rozanov. "You want?" He asks Shane eventually. Shane just nods, then leans in again to

capture Rozanov's mouth in a slow, languid kiss that deepens immediately after Rozanov shoves his tongue inside of Shane's mouth.

"Please fuck me, Rozanov," Shane says as he pulls back, eyes gleaming with want. "Please."

Rozanov traces his fingers down Shane's spine. "Okay, okay." He stretches towards his nightstand, grabbing a condom and lube from the drawer. He sits up slightly, tearing the wrapper with steady hands. He rolls the condom over his cock, already hard and leaking, which would normally drive Shane to tears except he's too busy peppering kisses all over the juncture where Rozanov's jaw meets his neck.

Shane hears the lube click open, then after a while he feels Rozanov's lubed fingers circling his entrance. "Relax for me," Rozanov says softly, pressing one finger in slowly. Shane gasps, his body yielding for the touch as Rozanov works it in deeper.

"Feels good," Shane breathes, rocking his hips to meet the motion. Rozanov's eyes stay locked on his face, watching every flicker of pleasure. He adds a second finger, scissoring them apart to stretch Shane. Wet, lewd sounds start to echo in the room, which makes Shane moan louder, his cock hardening fully between them and dripping cum into Rozanov's stomach.

"You're so beautiful," Rozanov praises, voice so low it almost sounds like a growl. He curls his fingers, hitting the spot inside Shane that makes him cry out loud. "There it is," Rozanov whispers. "You like that, Hollander? Do I make you feel good?"

Shane nods frantically, sweat starting to bead on his brows. "Rozanov, please," he croaks out. "Rozanov, I'm ready. Come on. Please, please, please—"

"Shh, it's okay. It's okay. Take what you want, *любимый*," Rozanov says as he withdraws his fingers, leaving Shane aching and empty. *That just won't do*, Shane thinks, as he lowers himself carefully, the head of Rozanov's cock entering him with a delicious burn. Shane doesn't stop until he's fully seated, and even then he only does to savor the feel of Rozanov inside him. The connection.

"Oh Fuck. Fuck, Rozanov—"

Rozanov's hand settles on Shane's waist, steadying him with a bruising grip. "That's it, so fucking good for me. Ride me, Shane. Show me how much you want this."

What else can Shane do? He moves.

Shane lifts up, then drops down back, repeating it until he builds a steady rhythm. Each drop drags Rozanov's cock along his walls, the tip of it hitting him just right that it sends a jolt of pleasure through him every time. His own cock bobs between them, hard and untouched. Shane's thighs shake, and he leans forward to support himself on Rozanov's chest, changing his angle to—*oh, fuck, that's good*, he thinks. "Right there, fuck... f—oh, fuck, Rozanov."

Rozanov bucks his hips up, meeting Shane with sharp thrusts. One of his hands moves to take Shane's cock, wrapping around it with a firm stroke that matches their tempo. "You're

incredible,” Rozanov breathes into Shane’s mouth, thumb swiping over the sensitive head.”Fucking beautiful. So tight around me, Hollander. So good for me.”

Sweat glistens on their skin, the room starting to get warmer and warmer from their exertion. Shane’s rhythm falters as his climax nears, his body trembling. “I’m going to cum. Fuck, Roz—” he warned, voice strained, hips grinding harder. “I can’t, I’m going to—”

Rozanov’s eyes lock on to his. “Brace yourself,” he whispers. Shane barely has time to react before he feels Rozanov’s strong arms wrap around him, flipping them over in one fluid roll while keeping himself buried deep inside Shane. He hits the mattress with a soft thud, legs hooking around Rozanov’s waist as he looms above.

Now driving the pace, Rozanov thrust into Shane with deeper and harder strokes, the bed shifting and creaking beneath them with every thrust. He pins Shane’s wrists above his head, leaning down to kiss his neck, teeth grazing skin like he wants to bite. To make his mark. It takes everything in Shane not to beg him to leave one.

Shane arches up, meeting every thrust, the intensity in his gut coiling tighter. “Yes, fuck—Roz—oh, fuck, just like that. Just like, oh f—” he gasps, fingers intertwining with Rozanov’s. Rozanov’s free hand lifts Shane’s leg over his shoulder, opening him wider for even deeper access. “Oh, fuck—I’m gonna cum. Please, I’m—”

“Cum,” Rozanov commands softly, breathing hot against Shane’s ear, his own control slipping. The single word tips Shane over—he clenches around Rozanov, orgasm crashing through him in hot spurts, cum painting their stomachs as he cries out Rozanov’s name.

Rozanov powers through it, the movement of his hips growing more and more erratic as he nears his own climax. With one last deep thrust, he groans, cumming inside Shane. “Hollander... fuck,” he pants, collapsing gently on top of Shane, careful not to crush him.

They lay there for a moment, hearts racing and breaths slowing down until Rozanov’s cock softens enough for him to ease out. He ties the condom and tosses it aside, which makes Shane grimace in disgust, but he doesn’t stop Rozanov from pulling him close and kissing his damp temple. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I am,” Shane nods, curling into Rozanov’s side with a content sigh. “Great start to the new year.”

“Different kind of firework, yes?”

“Okay, you made it gross. Get off.”

“No, Hollander,” Rozanov whines, pulling him closer. “Stay here.”

Shane laughs, soft and tired and muffled against Rozanov’s chest. He lets himself be pulled, his cheek settling over Rozanov’s heart which, he swears, is beating just as fast as his own. They lie like that for a while. Rozanov’s fingers move in idle patterns along Shane’s back—circles becoming lines becoming nothing at all.

“Hey,” Shane murmurs after a while, wrinkling his nose. “I feel kind of gross.”

“No, you are perfect, Hollander.”

“There’s cum drying on my stomach.”

“Okay, so you are perfect and gross. Like all people after sex.”

Shane huffs. “Come on, I want to shower.”

Rozanov tightens his hold again, chin tipping down to rest against Shane’s hair. “Not yet. Let me hold you.”

“Okay, fine,” Shane replies, though it’s not like he put up much of a fight. He feels Rozanov smile against his hair, satisfied, and they stay exactly where they are for a little while longer. Eventually, though, discomfort wins, and Shane shifts to stretch his legs. He pats Rozanov once on the chest. “I still want that shower. We can do it together.”

“Ugh,” Rozanov groans, clearly torn. Then, with exaggerated reluctance, he releases him. “Fine.”

They stumble into the bathroom together, sleepy and sore and laughing as they bump into each other in the narrow space. At some point, Rozanov presses a kiss to Shane’s temple, then the nape of his neck, and they just stand there under the spray holding each other. Then they towel off and wander back to the bed, the top sheets pushed aside so they don’t lay on their own mess.

And they just lay there. Again. Clean and warm, limbs tangled together. Shane results his head against Rozanov’s shoulder again.

“I really need to look for a flight back to Montreal soon,” Shane says eventually.

Rozanov sighs. “Do it later.”

Shane exhales, thinking about it—the logistics, his responsibilities back in Montreal, the inevitability of his and Rozanov’s separate lives outside of the four walls of his hotel room. It’s a lot. It’s too much.

So he presses a kiss on Rozanov’s lips. “Alright.”

Shane sits on one of the uncomfortable metal chairs near his boarding gate, coat zipped up and his backpack tucked between his feet. The terminal buzzes around him, people all restless both from the celebrations of the day and the fact that flights are starting back up again after yesterday’s delays.

He's listening to a boarding announcement when his phone vibrates in his hand. The suddenness of it makes his thumb jerk, and when he looks down he sees 'Lily' on the screen.

Lily

How is flight?

Jane

Still at the airport. Waiting.

You?

I don't have flight until evening.

I have surprise for you.

Again?

[IMG_1410]

"Oh, you have got to be kidding me."

It's a blurry photo of Shane asleep, curled slightly on his side, one arm tucked under the pillow. His face is smushed, relaxed in a way he rarely ever sees, mouth parted just a little. In the foreground, close to the camera, is an eye. Dark lashes, familiar blue.

Fuck off.

Why?

You look beautiful, Hollander.

Like princess who sleeps.

You're an asshole.

You like me anyway.

See you.

Shane lets out a laugh, if only to help ebb the sudden fluttering in his heart that starts up over the idea of Rozanov pausing with his life, phone in hand, just to capture the moment with Shane beside him. Jane and Lily are gone now. Back to Hollander and Rozanov, real names and real lives and everything else that comes with it.

Yeah.

See you.

Already counting down the days.

But he gets to have Ilya Rozanov like this. It's a pretty good way to start the year.

Ilya's conversation with Svetlana:

- *Sveta, Hello, Yes, happy new year to you too.*
- *No, I will not be in Boston tonight. I will not be in Boston until tomorrow evening, probably. Yes, I am with someone... Yes, it's Jane. Can you shut up? Don't laugh.*
- *Yes, very lucky for me that she's in New York too. What? No, I will not let you talk to her, are you crazy? Leave me alone. Leave her alone.*
- *What do you mean 'describe her'? Why? She's very beautiful. Short black hair. A bit shorter than me in height. She's got wide brown eyes. And freckles. Sveta, she has so many freckles it's crazy. I really like them. They look beautiful on her. She's a little annoying though, but I think I'll be fine.*
- *Yes, I like when she annoys me, because that means she's thinking of me. Sveta! Don't you like it when beautiful men think of you? Okay, what else. She has a fat ass. Really great when—you're the one who asked for a description! Wait, are you laughing? Why are you laughing at me? Leave me alone—Sorry, Jane, have to take this call elsewhere.*

End Notes

fic notes:

1. For my good friends Percy (who once again looked through this fic and did translation. rip to the google doc) and Kay (terminalhearts), who made an edit of Ilya and Shane to Potion by Djo.

2. Title is from "New Year's Day" by Taylor Swift, duh. Inspo from this fic came from the fact that I always wanted to write a New Year's Eve/Day fic. A lot of these paragraphs are actually taken from a prior Steddie one. LOL! But other song inspos are "Potion" by Djo and "Bless the Telephone" by Labi Siffre.

3. I really liked this one! I think it's silly and ridiculous but also I feel like they'd have this moment yknow like, 2017 is Florida and Shane and Boston (I think. I fr need to make a timeline note) and so much HAPPENED. Like 2016 is the perfect year to go damn we might be something... and then not really do anything about it. And then everything is fucked the next year. If the timeline feels confusing to you trust me I am also confused. Just think of it as a full on AU. It actually is.

4. Ilya consent king! Ilya never pushing Shane to do shit he doesn't want to do! I think about it all the time.

5. I really loved writing their texts. Maybe I should do a text fic or a social media au. Ugh I can't believe I have to go back to studying after living in yaoi heaven during the break.

6. Shane having a big family is canon forever to me. I think he'd have a lot of cousins IDK. It's just better for me that way. Also Ilya's mimosa salad, Russian NYE experience is from oomf Percy who once again did the beautiful translation for me.

7. I loved Ilya's phone call with Svetlana. I didn't tag her because she doesn't really have a speaking role and I want for a character to speak before I tag them, but lmk. Translation is at the end though it's not exact. We worked with what we had!

8. Ilya knows what an NYE kiss is he's just a bit shocked Shane would do it in public with him and his brain is buffering.

9. I still cannot write smut. Sorry.

10. Might be minor edits along the way because of typos and grammar and whatnot. Also sorry to New Yorkers who will read this. I didn't wanna bother anyone for accuracy and also I live in the PH so I'm lowkey allowed to be inaccurate about America. I TRIED, OKAY? But just know I am in fact sorry.

And that's all for now. Happy New Year! I have not forgotten about Steve Harrington (unfortunately) and my other fics... though IDK (still) when I will be continuing. As always, you can yell at me in the comments (please do. please talk to me PLEASEEEEE) or on Twitter

at @tobeclosers (for Heated Rivalry and "other stuff" posting). English isn't my first language, so my grammar is going to be wonky. See you all in the next one.

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