

It's Been A Long Time Coming

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It's Been A Long Time Coming

by [leiascully](#)

Summary

Ilya and Shane are so excited to have made the playoffs in Shane's first season with the Centaurs until they remember: no sex during the playoffs.

Notes

Timeline: after the epilogue of The Long Game; Shane and Ilya are married and living in Ottawa and it's Shane's first season with the Centaurs

Author's Note: ~~I have five-ish chapters planned. I'll update the tags as needed. Expect a lot of things that may or may not count as sex, and a lot of argument about it :)~~ Thanks to Taylor Swift for the cheeky title.

If you're reading this as part of the series, yeah, there are a couple of things that are inconsistent with or contradicted by earlier stories now. But I wrote this one pretty early, so it may be different :)

Chapter 1: Postseason

"Fuck," Shane says, very suddenly and very loudly. Even Anya looks up.

"What is it?"

"We made the playoffs," Shane says. He looks horrified.

"Yes," Ilya says, still scrolling on his phone. Svetlana sent him some photos of new cars. He probably won't buy one, but he's thinking about it. "I remember like it was only yesterday. Because it was only yesterday. I think I still have beer in my hair."

"Yeah, but." Shane gets up from the couch and paces around the living room. Anya watches him for a moment and then puts her head back down. "We can't have sex."

There is a long silence as they both think about this.

"Oh, fuck," Ilya says. He puts his phone down on the coffee table. In his mind, the calendar stretches out from April until June, empty empty empty. He doesn't think he and Shane have gone a whole week without sex since Shane moved to Ottawa, and that felt like a long time.

"It's never been that big a problem because we never lived together before," Shane says. "We didn't play for the same team and we usually didn't play against each other."

"Yes, I know," Ilya tells him.

"I mean I wouldn't have, even if we had played against each other," Shane says. "You just can't have sex during the playoffs. It's bad luck."

Ilya sighs. "Also bad luck that I will have to see your terrible beard that you try to grow. But maybe that will make me not want to have sex with you?"

The look Shane gives him is very funny.

"Maybe we will lose in the first or second round?" Ilya suggests, just to see Shane's forehead wrinkle up even more.

"You don't want to win the Cup together?" Shane sounds kind of angry, kind of like he might cry.

Ilya shrugs. "Win the Cup, get to fuck you. Either way, I am winning."

Shane pounces on him. "Ilya, you have to take this seriously."

"Shane," Ilya says, pulling his husband close and using his most no-fun voice, "I take this very seriously." He pushes the hair out of Shane's eyes. "As your captain. As your husband. But also it's very funny. Most hockey players have not had exactly the same problem as us. Finally, finally, after so many years of barely seeing each other during the season, we live

together, we play for the same team, we are doing well, we can fuck whenever we want...and now this."

Shane sighs. "Maybe it will make it easier, that we both have this superstition. I know Jackie wasn't the biggest fan of when we made the playoffs when I was on the Metros."

His body is warm, even through the blanket that is covering Ilya. Ilya loves the way it feels on top of his: the weight of Shane, the angles of him. Shane has put on some muscle since he agreed to give up his silly diet and eat real food. His ass feels so round when Ilya rests his hand on it. Ilya resists the urge to squeeze. He knows where that leads: to forbidden destinations where everyone is naked and sweaty and very, very happy.

"So," Ilya says, like he's not starting to get hard. "We are not having sex. We should make some rules. Can we kiss?"

"Of course we can kiss."

"Not 'of course'," Ilya says. "When we kiss, we usually end up fucking."

"We can kiss without having sex," Shane says in his stern captain voice. Ilya enjoys hearing it, even if Shane isn't the captain of the Centaurs.

"Show me." Ilya puts a challenge in his voice. He knows Shane can't resist. Shane kisses him, hard and fast, pulling away just as quickly, almost not a kiss at all. Ilya pushes his hand into Shane's hair and pulls him back down, because Shane doesn't get to pretend that this is the way they usually kiss. He kisses Shane back, soft, sweet, a little tongue and then a little more, until Shane is melting against Ilya and Ilya is arching up against him.

"Fuck," Shane says, and rolls off the couch and Ilya, almost falling into the coffee table. "Stop! Goddammit, Ilya."

"You said we could kiss," Ilya points out, propping himself up on his elbows.

"Not like that!" Shane's cheeks are pink and his hair is messy. He looks so cute. "That kind of kissing leads to sex!"

"All our kissing leads to sex!" Ilya says again.

"Kiss me...from a distance," Shane suggests.

Ilya blows him a kiss, accompanied by a middle finger.

"Not like that," Shane says. He pulls Ilya up off the couch, standing carefully so their bodies aren't touching. He leans in and kisses Ilya, keeping space between them. Ilya sets his hands on Shane's hips. The urge to slip his fingers into Shane's waistband and haul him in is strong, but Ilya is even stronger. They kiss, delicately, and then Shane steps back.

"Like that," he says.

"Maybe we shouldn't kiss at all," Ilya suggests.

Shane stares at him. He looks like he's seen something disgusting and scary. "Is that what you want?"

"Of course not." Ilya cups his hand around Shane's face. "Fucking hell, Shanya. I already suffered through years of not kissing you. What I want is to kiss you all the time. But maybe it's worse to kiss you only a little."

"We could pretend we're hiding again?" Shane says, but he's already shaking his head when he says it. "No. Bad idea. Forget I said that."

"To have just a little of you is very difficult," Ilya says. He can hear the quiet loneliness in his own voice, leftover from the time they were apart. Immediately, Shane puts his arms around Ilya. Ilya leans into him and feels the loneliness crawl back into its hiding place.

"It's a stupid fucking superstition anyway," Shane mutters into Ilya's shoulder. He squeezes Ilya tight and moves away again, pacing the room.

Ilya nods. "But it's our stupid fucking superstition. So okay. We will figure it out."

"I think we can do it," Shane says. He has his hands on his hips. His nostrils are flared and his jaw is firm: he looks so determined, he could be in a superhero movie, standing next to mutant Rose. His posture is so full of energy that Anya stands up and barks at nothing. They both laugh. Ilya drops to ruffle her ears.

"Good girl," he croons. "You know your papa is so brave, hmm?"

"I just want to win," Shane says. "You and me. I want to show everyone this is the right choice."

Ilya pets Anya a few more times and stands up. "It's the right choice for us, so." He wraps his arms around Shane from behind. At least that way he won't kiss Shane. On the mouth, anyway.

"The right choice for us and for our careers," Shane insists. "I know it was hard for you to leave Boston."

Ilya shrugs. "Yes, but I got laid a lot more when I moved to Ottawa."

"Fuck off," Shane says. "You were getting laid plenty."

"At first," Ilya says. "Then I developed a problem, remember?" He nuzzles at Shane's neck.

"I think I remember," Shane says. "A slow hockey player with beautiful freckles, or something?"

"And a weak backhand," Ilya reminds him. "Don't forget the weak backhand."

"Fuck you," Shane says. There's laughter in his voice.

"I can't," Ilya says, trying to sound so sad. "Because of this superstition that all hockey players believe."

"Fine," Shane says. "Fuck me in June when we win the Cup and prove we weren't insane to ditch winning teams just so we could be together or whatever."

"Very much whatever." Ilya tries very hard not to grind up against Shane.

"Hey," Shane says. "It was worth it. Even if we don't win. You know I know that. I'd rather kiss you than the Cup. Just so you know."

Ilya props his chin on Shane's shoulder. "I don't know if that's the kind of thing I want to hear from my star center, especially since he took my position. I think he should care about winning, yes?"

"I care, I care!" Shane says. "Of course I fucking care, fuck! After everything people said when you came to Ottawa? When I came to Ottawa? I want to shut everybody up who said it was career-ending or that it was going to tarnish our legacy."

"I want to hear you say you want it," Ilya growls. He tightens his hands on Shane. "Tell me how much you want to win, Hollander."

"I fucking want it so bad," Shane says in a low voice. His body is tense against Ilya's. "With you. I want to win it with you, Ilya, I want to win every fucking thing with you. Cups. Medals. Everything. I want to stand on the top of the fucking world with you."

"That's better." He squeezes Shane's pec. Shane gasps.

"God, Ilya, I want you so bad."

I promise," Ilya says in Shane's ear, "that I will not fuck you until I have the Cup in my hands. I think that should be, mm, incentive, yes?"

"Yes," Shane says, and shivers against Ilya. "Don't you mean until playoffs are over?"

"No. I want to win."

Shane pauses. "Technically, playoffs haven't started yet. Actually started-started, you know? I mean yeah, yesterday was the last day of the regular season, but is it really the playoffs until the first game? I mean, we fucked last night, and that didn't count, right? That was just celebration. It's 'no sex during playoffs' that people say, not 'no sex during postseason'."

"I like this thinking," Ilya says. "Winning makes you horny, hmm?" He kisses the side of Shane's neck, careful not to leave a mark.

"Yeah, it does," Shane says. "And this isn't helping."

"Should I stop?" Ilya asks, sliding one hand under Shane's shirt.

"No," Shane says, very fast. His abs flex under Ilya's hand. Ilya can tell he's breathing faster.

"Mm, Shane." Ilya hums against Shane's skin. "Did you shave this morning?"

"What? No." Shane reaches up to touch his own face. "Not that you can tell, but no, I didn't."

"Then it is playoffs," Ilya said. "If you are growing the playoffs beard, I can't fuck you." He nibbles at the edge of Shane's ear. "Too bad." He's really enjoying himself now, even if he's going to have to go jack off after this. Maybe Shane can watch. That probably doesn't count. Maybe.

Shane turns in his arms. "Did you shave this morning?" He runs his hands over Ilya's face, answering his own question. "Fuck, no, you didn't."

"Sorry," Ilya says, even though he's not. "The captain has to set a good example for the team, yes?"

"Fuck all the way off," Shane mumbles.

"Okay," Ilya says, and lets go. Shane doesn't fall over, but he does look like he could. Ilya glances down and smiles.

"Shut up," Shane says before Ilya can say anything. "You're hard too."

"Yes, but I am going to take a nice long shower," Ilya says. "So soon I will not be hard, and then I will be extra clean, and then I will be ready to go to Wyatt and Lisa's house for dinner."

Shane rolls his eyes up to the sky. "I forgot about that."

"Well, it's okay, it's not like you had other plans for tonight." Ilya lets his fingers brush over Shane's hip as he walks past.

"Fuck you," Shane says.

"In June," Ilya tells him, and goes upstairs. He can feel Shane's eyes following him. He pushes his hand down his shorts and hears Shane swear.

"You could join me," he calls down to Shane.

"No the fuck I can't," Shane says. "I'm using the downstairs shower."

"Okay," Ilya says. "See you soon." He drops his clothes one piece at a time, leaving a trail from the stairs to their bedroom, because it will annoy Shane. He leaves the bathroom door open, just in case Shane does want to watch. The steam from the hot water fogs up the glass. He touches himself slowly at first, imagining Shane in the other shower doing the same thing, but it starts to feel like it did when they were living apart, so he finishes faster.

By the time he comes out of the bathroom, Shane is already dressed. He looks very kissable, unfortunately. His hair is still damp.

"Feel better?" Ilya asks.

"Yeah," Shane says. "You?"

"Sure," Ilya says. "Lots of practice, yeah?"

"Definitely," Shane says, and he smiles a little bit. "It's gonna be fine. We'll make it to June, no problem."

"Of course," Ilya agrees. "We definitely, definitely won't fuck until then."

"It's good we're going to Wyatt and Lisa's," Shane says, like he's trying to make himself believe it. "Less chance to be tempted."

"Until we get home," Ilya points out.

"We'll deal with that when we need to," Shane says. "Get dressed. I'm going to feed Anya and then we can take her for a walk."

Ilya can't help smiling. How funny it is, that this is the life he wants: Shane in a linen shirt and tailored pants, looking like a dad about to go to a slightly-cool barbecue, on his way to feed their adorable dog so they can have dinner with their teammate and his doctor wife. No clubs afterwards, no shots, no hookups. They'll probably bring a bottle of wine Shane's mom suggested. The four of them might finish it, but they might not. And after, Shane and Ilya will come home to their house in this quiet neighborhood and they definitely won't have sex.

"What?" Shane asks.

"Nothing," Ilya says.

"Okay," Shane says, sounding skeptical, but he turns to go downstairs, kicking Ilya's clothes into a pile as he goes. Ilya smiles even bigger.

It's all so incredibly boring. Ilya is so happy.

Chapter 2: Postseason, Pre-Playoffs

Chapter Summary

Negotiations commence.

Dinner is nice. It's still strange to Ilya to be part of a couple, especially the kind of couple that does things with other couples, like have a nice dinner where nobody gets drunk even though they stay kind of late just talking about whatever. Lisa tries not to make too many faces when Shane and Ilya and Wyatt talk about the injuries they've had over the years. Nobody minds when Ilya gets quiet and just listens for a while, holding Shane's hand on his knee. And he gets to go home with Shane, in the same car, to the same house, and even though it's been months, it still fucking stuns Ilya. He gets to go home with his *husband*, forever.

They get home, say goodnight to Anya, and go upstairs. Ilya peels off his shirt and, because he loves his husband, tosses it toward the hamper. When he looks over, Shane is staring at the bed.

"What?"

"So if we're not having sex, are we sleeping in the same bed?"

Ilya smirks. "You think we can't sleep in the same bed without fucking?"

"I mean, historically, no, we can't?" Shane says.

"You think I can't control myself around you, Hollander?" Ilya asks, stepping closer to Shane.

"I definitely don't," Shane tells him, putting his hands on Ilya's waist and digging his fingers into Ilya's back just a little. Shane is smiling in that very sexy way that Ilya can't resist kissing. So he does kiss Shane, because of all the times he couldn't. Not too much tongue, though: that will lead to his tongue other places. But even this almost-gentle kiss sends an electric shock through him, sizzling in his veins.

He groans and breaks the kiss. Shane looks at him with hazy, horny, happy eyes, because he is very easy when it comes to Ilya, and Ilya loves him so much that it makes his chest hurt. Ilya takes Shane's beautiful face in his hands and kisses Shane's forehead.

"I think maybe you have a point."

"I know," Shane says. "I'm very smart, actually."

Ilya tips his head side to side like he's not sure he agrees, because he can never resist giving Shane shit. Shane glares at him. Ilya grins, and then gets serious. "I don't want to sleep in a

different bed."

"I don't either," Shane says. "It feels like we spent too long sleeping in different beds."

"So we will be good." Ilya kisses Shane on the forehead again.

"Yeah," Shane agrees. "It'll be hard — shut up — but we can do it. And, you know, we'll have away games and stuff. We'll have separate beds at the hotel. Maybe even other roommates. That should calm us down."

"Very helpful," Ilya says. "And all our roommates will also not be having sex."

"Maybe we should talk about what counts as sex," Shane says, only blushing a little.

"Obviously when you fuck me. But no sex doesn't mean no orgasms. I mean, I don't think it does."

"Stop thinking about my mouth on you," Ilya tells him, tapping his toe against Shane's.

"Not helping," Shane says. "That's definitely sex-y, even if it's not, like, fucking. I think no sex means no, um, penetration. Of any kind. No mouth stuff. No fingering. No using a dildo on the other person."

"Not even my fingers in your mouth?" Ilya asks, trying to sound innocent.

"*Not* helping!" Shane says again.

"I think if I make you come, that is sex," Ilya tells him. "Even if there's no penetration. But if you make yourself come...." He shrugs. "It's okay that you will be thinking about me."

"I could be thinking about something else." Shane has his little-shit expression on. "You don't know."

"I know," Ilya says with certainty.

"So does that mean phone sex doesn't count?" Shane asks. "If I'm touching myself. Is that you making me come? Because technically I'm doing the work."

"You want me to go downstairs and call you?" Ilya looks toward the door.

"Not right now," Shane says. "It's still the first night of postseason. We have to be stronger than this." He pauses. "Or at least keep some options for later."

Ilya sighs. "You're right. Phone sex every night would be a betrayal of our teammates. Unless they are having phone sex with their wives and girlfriends and such."

"They're probably not," Shane says, and then thinks about it. "Right? They're probably not?"

Ilya shrugs. "If they're not, I think a little less of them. It is important to be a creative lover."

"The whole point is not to be spending our energy on sex." Shane frowns. "We need it for the ice."

"What we need is to go to sleep," Ilya says. "We have practice in the morning."

"So we'll sleep," Shane says, but he doesn't move. For a few minutes they just stare at each other, smiling a little. Then Ilya reaches down and undoes his pants and lets them drop to the floor. He steps out of them and walks into the bathroom to brush his teeth. In a moment, Shane joins him, also down to his boxers. It is ridiculously domestic, a word Ilya has learned to replace "boring", and everything he never knew he wanted. Ilya brushes, rinses, and kisses his husband on the cheek before he goes back and climbs into the bed. He is very tired, full and happy and relaxed from the wine. Anya comes into the bedroom as he pulls the covers up and crawls into her own bed, turning around a few times and then settling down with a deep sigh. Ilya knows how she feels.

"Sweet dreams, my princess," Ilya calls to her.

"Thanks," Shane says, coming back and getting under the covers.

"Those are Anya's good wishes," Ilya says sternly. "Don't take them."

"Fine, give me wishes of my own," Shane says.

Ilya reaches out and strokes Shane's face, then slaps him gently on the pecs. "Sweet dreams, Shanya. Try not to dream of me, though. Too sexy."

"You wish," Shane says, turning over so he faces away from Ilya.

Ilya pulls him close, fitting their bodies together. He sleeps better with Shane pressed against him, and he knows Shane does too. Yes, they'll get too hot soon and roll away from each other, but he likes to fall asleep with his face tucked against Shane's back.

"Я тебя люблю," he murmurs into Shane's neck, and Shane says it back.

In the morning, Ilya makes a list on the whiteboard next to the fridge while Shane blends the silly smoothies that Ilya will never admit he kind of enjoys now.

- ~~fucking~~ (obviously)
- ~~blowjobs~~
- ~~toys~~ :(
- ~~hand-jobs~~
- ~~rimming~~

Underneath, he makes a slightly more optimistic list.

- all by yourself
- phone sex?
- if we don't touch?
- dry humping

- the thing where you don't put it in but almost

Ilya has learned so much very useful English vocabulary.

Shane writes "frottage" next to the "dry humping", because he speaks French or something, and crosses the whole last line out. He looks like he wants to cross off "dry humping/frottage" too, but he puts the marker down and pushes a smoothie over to Ilya.

"Too sexy?" Ilya asks.

"Definitely," Shane says.

Ilya blows air out through his lips. "Not so many options."

"It's fine," Shane says. "It's going to be fine." He sounds like he's trying to convince himself. "Drink your smoothie."

"We're doing this for the Cup," Ilya says, clinking his glass against Shane's.

"For the Cup," Shane repeats, and they drink their smoothies.

Practice is good. The team is playing well. Ilya likes being the captain, especially having Shane on his line. They have their own moments of wanting to argue, but mostly they work together. Chemistry, like David says.

Dykstra skates down the line and feels everyone's faces. Most of the team has visible stubble, so it's not really needed, but it's tradition, it seems, at least on the Ottawa Centaurs. Ilya thinks it might be a new tradition, but it's not so bad to encourage his team to feel like they're in this together. Traditions have to start somewhere.

Dykstra stops in a dramatic-on-purpose spray of ice. "Haas! Did you shave this morning?"

"No!" Luca says. "I'm just smooth!"

"I'm just messing with you," Dykstra says, patting Luca's face. "It's not your fault you're blond." He rubs a hand over Shane's face and one over Ilya's. "I feel stubble, boys. Good job."

"His beard will be bad," Ilya says, "but he will grow one."

"Right, I'm sure you can keep an eye on that," Dykstra says. "From inside your house. All the razors put away, eh?"

"Of course," Shane says.

"And all the," Dykstra starts to say, and then thinks better of it. "Huh."

"What?" Ilya says, pretending innocence.

"I mean we're all not. Uh. You know."

"No?" Ilya says. "I don't know. Tell me."

"Having, uh, relations," Dykstra says. He looks like he's blushing.

Ilya puts a brotherly hand on his shoulder. "Is this weird because I am your captain or weird because I am fucking — or for right now not fucking, don't worry — your teammate?"

"Not helping," Shane hisses. He is also blushing. Ilya finds it very charming. It makes Shane's adorable freckles stand out.

"Both?" Dykstra says. "I guess the teammate thing more? I've never said that to someone in that situation."

"That you knew," Ilya says smoothly.

"Right," Dykstra says. He looks like he's considering a whole new world of possibilities.
"That I knew."

"Maybe you will think about that in the future," Ilya suggests.

"Definitely," Dykstra says. "I mean, not in a weird way. In a very hypothetical way."

"Why don't we all hit the showers?" Coach Wiebe says.

"So that went well," Bood says to Ilya as they skate off the ice and clomp toward the benches to take off their skates.

Ilya shrugs. "Could have gone worse."

Chapter 3: First Round

Chapter Summary

Ilya paints a word-picture.

The first round of the playoffs is okay. It's not like they haven't gone a few months without sex before. Ilya remembers the time between the All Stars Game in Tampa and going to Shane's cottage for the first time. Marleau's bad hit took Shane out of the playoffs and eliminated any chance of a meeting. But it was easier then. Ilya didn't live with Shane then. He didn't wake up next to Shane, or watch Shane rub sleep out of his eyes over breakfast, or work out next to Shane, or practice with Shane, or make dinner with Shane, or walk his dog around their neighborhood with Shane, or relax with Shane in the evenings, or fall asleep next to Shane.

Really, it was much easier not having sex with Shane when Shane was far away.

The problem is that Shane is very sexy and also very adorable. And he smells good, even when he's all sweaty. And he's warm, and he's strong, and he's soft in the right places and hard in the right places, just exactly what Ilya wants, always.

At least Shane's playoff beard is very ugly, and it makes kissing scratchy because both of their beards are a bad length for it. So it's easier not to kiss. The rest is not so easy not to do, but they manage.

"Our water bill is going to be higher than normal," Shane says once, and Ilya just looks at him. "Because we've been spending so much time in the shower. Separately."

"Okay, so we'll shower together when playoffs are over," Ilya says. "To save water. It's good for the environment, yes?"

"I don't know if that will reduce the time we spend in the shower, but okay," Shane says, and the way he smiles makes Ilya excuse himself.

They play Toronto and win in five matches, because with Shane and Ilya and Troy on the front line and Wyatt in goal, the Centaurs are almost unbeatable. Nobody questions it when they don't room together at the hotel. That makes it easier. It's strange, though, to be together and not touch so much. It's strange to sleep in separate beds. At least it isn't in their own house.

Because they do so well, they have a few extra days before the second round. Shane's parents come over for dinner. The whiteboard by the fridge is erased just in time. Shane grills some salmon and vegetables and they eat outside, enjoying the nice weather. Anya gallops around

the yard and comes back to beg for little bits of fish and bread and carrots. She loves carrots for some reason.

"Have you thought any more about the campaign proposal Reebok sent over?" Yuna asks, reaching for her white wine.

"We'll do it," Shane says. "Not because of the money. Just to, I don't know. Be role models or whatever."

"Also for the money," Ilya says. "But we will put it into the foundation, probably."

"Smart," David says approvingly. "Tax-deductible."

"It's not about that," Shane says, "but that's a nice side benefit, I guess."

Ilya considers making a joke about the ad Speedo wants to do, but decides his in-laws don't need to think about that too much. That's one photoshoot Yuna might not attend. That's okay with Ilya. He loves his mother-in-law very much, but there are some things that maybe she doesn't need to see, and that's more of Ilya than a normal swimsuit shows.

"Well, you boys have more money than you know what to do with," Yuna says.

"Yes, me and my kept man," Ilya says, patting Shane's hand. "It's good he can still contribute something."

"It is too bad Ottawa can't pay you both what you're worth." Yuna pats her mouth with a napkin.

"It's worth it," Shane says. "To be together." He turns his palm over and laces his fingers through Ilya's. Ilya leans over and gives him a small kiss.

"I like the beard, Ilya," David says. "It suits you."

"Thank you." Ilya runs a hand over it. "It feels strange."

"You don't always grow one, do you?" Yuna asks. "I don't think I remember you having a beard the first time you won the Cup."

"Sometimes you don't need to follow a superstition to win," Ilya says, carefully not looking at Shane.

"You don't usually grow a beard either, honey," Yuna says to Shane.

"That's because my teammates always make me shave it after the second round because it looks like shit." Shane rubs his face with both hands. "They're probably going to do it again."

"As your captain, I will let them." Ilya smiles lovingly at his husband.

"I blame your mother," David says. "My side of the family is pretty hairy."

"When you played, did you grow a beard for your tournaments?" Ilya asks.

"Oh, we all did," David says. "Or tried, anyway. Bunch of college kids looking scruffy. But it was the only superstition anybody could agree on, so that's what we did." He glances between Ilya and Shane. Ilya can see that he is remembering the other superstitions. "Anyway. Are the Centaurs going to trample Montreal in round two?"

"We're gonna do our best," Shane says.

"I like your chances." Yuna stabs a piece of zucchini with her fork. "Without Shane, they've really struggled this season. I honestly don't know how they've managed to play so well against Boston."

"The rivalry is very motivational," Ilya says.

"Don't get me wrong, they're still my favorite team," Yuna says. "But I think you can take them."

"Thanks, Mom," Shane says.

"You're welcome, honey," Yuna says, smiling.

When Shane's parents are gone, Shane and Ilya clean up, loading the dishwasher together and washing the few things that are too delicate. It's so homey, the things people do in a home. It makes Ilya feel calm. Of course, it's a little boring, but it's nice that the house is clean. It's nice that they make it happen together.

He goes back to the whiteboard to recreate his list.

- **NO** sucking
- **NO** licking
- **NO** fucking
- **NO** dicks touching
- **NO** fingers in any holes
- *maybe*(!) sexy conversation (no video?)
- DIY OK
- **4 WEEKS UNTIL FINALS**

"Right, because no video makes it so much better," Shane says. "That's basically not phone sex. Or the version from the Dark Ages, maybe."

"You know and I know you could come from just my voice," Ilya tells him, in a voice that he knows makes Shane a little wild. "But to see all this?" He gestures at himself. "It helps, yes?"

"Do I like to look at you?" Shane props his elbows on the kitchen island. He's bent over at an angle that Ilya knows too well. Tempting. Ilya stays on the other side of the island. "You know I do."

"We don't play for a few days," Ilya says.

"I know the schedule." Shane knows what he's saying, Ilya is sure, but he likes to act like he doesn't.

"Maybe we could...talk?" Ilya raises his eyebrows.

"We're talking now." Shane's almost smiling. He fucking knows.

"Maybe we could talk about what I'm going to do to you in about a month when we are celebrating winning the Cup," Ilya suggests.

"Oh, that kind of conversation." Shane pretends to think about it. "Yeah, I guess we could."

"You guess," Ilya says in a flat voice. "Well, I guess you're already halfway to hard."

Now Shane really smiles. "More than halfway. I guess your voice really does do it for me."

"Good." Ilya jerks his chin up. "Go upstairs. I will call you."

"Да, сэр," Shane says in his decent accent, because he is an annoying brat who can learn any language. But at least he's taking orders.

Ilya gives Anya a chew bone to distract her and goes into the guest room downstairs, shutting the door behind him. He takes off his shirt and lies on the bed, rubbing his palm over his bulge with his pants still on. He needs the cloth between his hand and his dick so he doesn't come too fast. After a few minutes, he calls Shane and puts his phone on speaker.

"Oh hi, Ilya," Shane says. He's doing a good job of pretending he isn't frustrated at Ilya for making him wait. Maybe he got started by himself. "What are you up to tonight?"

"Thinking about a sexy man," Ilya tells him.

"Yeah?" Shane asks. "What does he look like?"

"So handsome." Ilya stretches.

"Yeah?" Shane's breathing is just a little bit faster. "You think you have a chance with him?"

"I hope so." Ilya strokes himself slowly, still through his pants. "He's very sexy, did I mention?"

"Tell me more about him."

"He's not so tall, but his body is very good. The athletic type, you know?"

"Yeah," Shane breathes. "I know."

"And I like his face," Ilya continues. "And his hair. It looks like you could get your hands into it and maybe pull."

"Do you think he likes that?"

"Oh, I think he does," Ilya says with confidence. "This hair is perfect for pulling. It's so blond and curly."

Shane groans. "Ilya!"

"What?" Ilya says, all innocence. "I told you I am thinking of a very sexy man. Blond hair. Blue eyes. A nice tattoo of a stupid bird."

"I think you're bad at phone sex," Shane says.

"Now you are just being mean," Ilya tells him. "I go to all this trouble to tell you about a handsome man and you have no appreciation for my word-pictures."

"I already know what you look like."

Ilya clicks his tongue. "I didn't say it was me."

"Who else has a tattoo of a bird?"

"Lots of people, probably." Ilya smiles at the noise Shane makes. "Why, do you want me to talk to you about something else?"

"Yeah!" Shane says. "Jesus Christ. I thought we were having — not having — sex."

"Oh, you want to hear what I would be doing if we were having sex?" Ilya asks.

"Fucking yes, I do," Shane says. "Paint me that word-picture."

"I would not be able to paint you any pictures with my hands on your hips and your dick in my mouth," Ilya says, making his voice low and smooth. "God, Shanya, I miss it. So smooth. I would lick you up and down and up and down until you were dripping for me, and then I would take it all in my mouth, deep."

"God, I wish you would," Shane says. His voice is a little desperate, almost whiny. Ilya loves that voice. He doesn't really care who's doing the fucking or the sucking or whatever: he likes it when Shane wants things and asks for them. He likes it when Shane trusts him to know exactly what Shane needs even if he doesn't ask and to give it to him, hard or slow or whatever is right.

"Are you touching yourself?" Ilya purrs.

"Yes!" Shane's already gasping a little.

"Are you thinking of my hot wet mouth on you? My tongue, wrapping around you? My fingers, stroking your balls?"

"Fuck," Shane pants. "I'd be pushing you away so I could suck your dick."

"Yes, you want it, don't you." Ilya reaches down his pants, finally, pushing the waistband down until his dick pops out.

"Yeah, I want it bad," Shane says.

"Every time we saw each other in the early days, you went straight to sucking my dick," Ilya says. He can hear the raspiness in his own voice. He's hard, a little precum on the tip, enough that he can work his foreskin back. He likes to rub it back and forth over the head. It doesn't feel like Shane's tongue, but it's something. "Like you couldn't help yourself."

"I couldn't, I can't, God, I love sucking your dick."

"Slower, slower," Ilya says soothingly. "I don't want you to cum yet."

"Okay," Shane says. Ilya can hear his breathing even out. "I'm, uh, sucking your dick just the way you like it."

"I pull you up," Ilya says. He works his hand over himself, wishing it were really Shane's mouth. "It feels too good, I'm too close. I push you down on the bed. I want to fuck you so bad but I can't wait and you can't either. I'm lying on top of you. I wrap my hand around both our dicks and stroke them together and you help too." He makes his voice extra low and quiet. "Can you feel it, Shanya? Can you feel my hand on you?"

"Yeah." Shane moans. Ilya has to close his eyes. He wishes he were in their bed, his body moving with Shane's, but it still feels good, talking to Shane while he touches himself.

"Can you feel my dick rubbing against yours?"

"You're so hard." Shane whimpers a little. "Oh God, Ilya, I'm close. I wanted to last but it's been too long."

"It's okay," Ilya tells him, "it's okay, you can cum for me. I want it."

"I want you to cum too," Shane pants. "Fuck, Ilya, will you?"

"Yes, yes, yes, I will," Ilya says. He jacks himself harder, closer to the phone so Shane can hear the noises that he's making. For a little while there are only the noises of their bodies. Ilya can almost feel Shane shivering against him when the pleasure hits. The way Shane moans sends Ilya over the edge too. His release splashes onto his stomach. He sprawls on the bed, trying to catch his breath.

"Fuck," Shane says. It sounds like he's far away. Maybe he knocked the phone off the bed. "Ilya, I wish you could fuck me for real." Now he sounds closer, but not close enough. Ilya misses the feel of Shane's skin against his. Sure, he felt it last night in bed when they were going to sleep, but it's different after sex.

"Just a few more weeks," Ilya promises. "We win the Cup. We go to the cottage. I will fuck you until you can't cum anymore and your balls are shriveled and dry like raisins."

"Gross," Shane says. "But yeah, that's what I want."

Ilya pulls a tissue out of the box by the bed and cleans himself up. He pulls his pants back up. "That was nice. It's better with video, I think."

"I like your word-pictures," Shane says, because he is so loyal and loving to Ilya. "You're a word-artist to me."

"Ah, you will buy my art," Ilya says.

"Yeah, all of it," Shane says in a warm voice. "I'll be your whatever it's called. Patron. Word-pictures all day long."

"Only sexy ones?" Ilya asks.

"Mostly sexy ones," Shane says. "But you know what, I think I'd like any word-picture you made for me."

"Maybe my second career after hockey," Ilya says. He gets up and leaves the guest room. Anya is still working on her bone, because she is the best dog.

"You're hired," Shane says. He yawns.

"Go take a shower before you fall asleep," Ilya tells him.

"You could join me," Shane suggests. "I mean it's not like we can do anything but get clean, right? Showering's not forbidden."

Ilya hangs up and takes the stairs two at a time. He finds Shane in the bathroom and folds his arms around his husband.

"What, did you miss me?" Shane asks, tipping his head against Ilya's shoulder.

"Yes," Ilya says, kissing the part where Shane's shoulder meets his neck. "I did."

"Me too," Shane says, and they wait together for the water to warm up.

Chapter 4: Second Round

Chapter Summary

Shane and Ilya relive a special moment.

Montreal puts up more of a fight than Toronto. The second round of playoffs goes seven full games and ends in overtime. But in the end, the Centaurs are victorious, thanks to a goal from Shane, assisted by Ilya. When they leave the stadium, there are two strange figures burning outside, clearly meant to be Shane and Ilya. It's a strange tradition. Ilya has never understood it. But it's a little bit sweet that he's on fire next to his husband, instead of only one of them being burned at a time. He wonders if he should be more bothered, especially now that everyone knows he is bi and Shane is gay, but the opposing fans were making these straw men long before anyone even suspected, so maybe it's just a regular amount of dislike.

They have dinner with Hayden and Jackie, a little late but in time to see the kids before they go to bed. The rest of the team is out at the clubs, Ilya is sure, but he barely misses it. It isn't like Shane dances much anyway, especially when he's not drinking, and since they're still in season, he would stick to ginger ale or soda water. Even Ilya can't drink as much now that he's 30, not if he doesn't want to feel it the next day. This is a very boring thought, and Ilya promises himself that one day, when they can do whatever they want after, he will take Shane clubbing in Montreal, and good things will happen, and he will remind them both that they're still young.

For now, they play video games with the twins in the living room while Hayden and Jackie finish cooking. It's nice, the way the girls remember their Uncle Ilya and Uncle Shane. It hasn't been so long, but still, Ilya wasn't sure. By the time dinner is ready, it's time for Ruby and Jade to sleep. They drag their a little and ask for extra hugs. Ilya promises that one day they can come to Ottawa and play with Anya again.

"I'm really glad to see you both," Jackie says as they all sit down.

"Yes, it is good to see you," Ilya agrees. He smiles at her.

"You fucking deserved it tonight, I gotta say." Hayden looks at Jackie and she points to the swear jar. He sighs.

"Thanks," Shane says.

"Playing against the two of you is like playing against Batman and Superman." Hayden frowns as he digs into his pasta. "I kinda liked it better when I only had to deal with one of you on the other team at a time."

"Which one of us is Batman and which one is Superman?" Shane asks.

"Obviously Ilya is Batman," Jackie says.

"What? Why?" Shane asks.

"He just is," Jackie says, and Hayden nods. "He could probably do the voice."

"Plus, Shane, you've got the glasses, so." Hayden shrugs. "Secret identity."

"Batman is cool," Ilya tells Shane. "He drives cool cars and goes to parties. Superman is just extra nice to everyone."

"Superman is an amazing reporter," Shane argues. "Yeah, he's nice, but he's not *just* nice."

"You are not just nice either," Ilya says. "I remember when you were fighting Scott Hunter."

"That was one time!" Shane says.

"Chill, Clark Kent," Hayden tells him. "Do you really wanna be Batman? No, you don't. You want to be the nice guy."

Shane grumbles, but settles down. For a few minutes, everybody just enjoys the food. Ilya gets sauce in his beard, but so does Hayden, which is okay.

"The new kid, the defender, he just got married a couple of months ago," Hayden says. "We all think they're gonna announce they're pregnant soon."

"At least you're out of the playoffs now," Jackie says. "The last thing he needs is you yelling at him about your weird playoff superstitions."

"I'll say this: not one of our kids was a playoff baby," Hayden says with pride.

"Yeah, but now you're snipped, right," Shane says. "So. Plausible deniability."

"Just what are you suggesting, Mr. Hollander?" Hayden's eyes are wide.

Jackie snorts. "Like I could talk him into that. Every last one of you is a freak about these things, I swear."

"Let no man say I was responsible for this loss!" Hayden says, gesturing dramatically with his fork. "I kept it in my pants. Or at least, I kept it to myself."

"I can confirm that he did," Jackie says. "It was really, really annoying."

"I would know I'd broken a promise to my teammates," Hayden says. "I couldn't betray my brothers."

Jackie wrinkles her nose. "Ew. You don't actually promise each other not to have sex during playoffs, do you?"

"Not out loud," Ilya says.

"It's kind of the honor code," Shane tells her. "But it's not like anyone can check."

"Playoff babies," Hayden says. "I mean, sometimes you can fudge the math, but still, it's kind of incontrovertible evidence." He eyes Shane and Ilya. "I guess you don't have that problem."

"Uh, no," Shane says. He's definitely blushing. Ilya enjoys that.

"It still counts, though, right?" Jackie says, and then answers herself, "yeah, of course, it's still sex. Sorry, I don't know why I said that. I guess I always kind of thought about the superstition being not to have sex with your wife or girlfriend or whatever."

"It's fine," Shane says. "There's not, like, a special rule about guys and guys. Mostly because everyone pretended it wasn't happening."

"But you're not, right?" Hayden asks. "I mean, you beat us, so you're not. Right?"

"What do you think?" Ilya looks Hayden right in his big shiny eyes, holding Hayden's gaze until Hayden looks away.

"Not my business," Hayden mumbles.

"Good for you, honey," Jackie says, patting Hayden's arm.

"So what have you all been up to?" Shane asks. Ilya is so charmed by his bashful husband. It's kind of funny how shy Shane is in front of people when he's so horny with Ilya. He presses his knee against Shane's under the table — not sexy, just because he loves Shane.

"I've been taking a gardening class," Jackie says. "Thinking about what I want to do when all the kids are finally in school."

"She's got more dirt on her clothes than the kids do," Hayden says. It sounds like he's bragging. He's grown on Ilya a little, mostly because he loves his family so much. "She's not telling you the whole thing. It's a garden design class, so she's doing all kinds of stuff. Matching plants that grow well together, plants that look good together, planning out seasonal stuff, all of that."

"It's just a hobby," Jackie says. "For now."

"If you want a garden at the cottage or at your place in Ottawa, you know who to call," Hayden says.

"Yeah, we might," Shane says. "It would be great to have some fresh herbs. Flowers. I bet my parents would be into that too."

"Definitely they would," Ilya agrees.

"I'll let you know," Jackie says, looking very pleased.

They hang around a while longer, talking about the rest of the playoffs and what the other Metros who are Shane's friends are doing and all the other things people talk about when they need to catch up, and then Shane and Ilya go back to the hotel. Shane starts to head to the elevator, but Ilya stops him with a hand on his waist.

"Ah, Mr. Hollander, there's been a change to your reservation."

"Oh?" Shane says. "It's so kind of the concierge to tell me this in person."

"Yes, we are dedicated to service here at...this hotel," Ilya says. He hands Shane a key card.

"Is this an upgrade?" Shane is smiling like it's a secret. Ilya loves when he makes that face.

"We think you will be very satisfied," Ilya says. "Please enjoy your stay."

"No sleeping in a room with Luca while he pretends not to look at me?" Shane asks. "Not in a weird way, but, yeah, okay, it's a little weird to be looked at like he's afraid he's going to disappoint me by breathing wrong because he grew up watching me play?"

"No," Ilya says, pressing into Shane's waist just enough with his fingers that Shane moves toward the elevators again. "No sleeping in a room with Luca."

He knows it's silly, to book a different room just so they can be together when they'll be home together again tomorrow night, but it isn't like he doesn't have the money. Anyway, it's romantic. From the look on Shane's face, he agrees.

They actually do stop by their shared rooms quickly to get their things, but then they're on their way up to the suite. And it's so fucking *nice* not to have to hide, not to take separate elevators, not to panic if it stops at another floor and someone sees them. Sometimes Ilya wonders if Yuna remembers the first time he almost met her, in the elevator on the way to kiss her son for the first time. He kind of hopes she doesn't, but she probably does. It probably makes sense to her now.

"This is nice," Shane says when they go into the room. "Cozy." He drops his bag on a chair. "The view is good too." He's looking at Ilya.

Ilya pushes him against the wall and kisses him. He can feel Shane smiling. His arms are around Ilya, his fingers digging into Ilya's back. Shane hitches his knee over Ilya's hip, pulling Ilya close against him.

"You know we can't," Shane says when they break the kiss.

"Okay, we can't fuck," Ilya says. "But there are other things."

"What did you have in mind?" Shane murmurs.

"The first time," Ilya says between kisses. "In the showers."

"The first time in my hotel room? When the whole thing took maybe ten minutes?"

"No." Ilya shakes his head. "Before the hotel room. After the commercial. In the showers."

"Ohhh," Shane says.

"We never got to finish," Ilya says.

"We never really got started," Shane argues. "At least, I didn't."

"Yes, it's terrible," Ilya says. "All this time and I never came. You have been edging me for how many years?"

"I don't think that's how that works," Shane says, smiling. "So you want to jerk off together in the shower in honor of the fact that we didn't do that more than a decade ago?"

"Yes, I do," Ilya says, squeezing Shane's pec, because he knows Shane likes it. "Maybe I can't fuck you, but I can put my hands on you, and I can watch you touch yourself."

"Pervert," Shane says.

"Oh, are you only now getting that?" Ilya pinches Shane's nipple gently.

"Oh, no, I knew." Shane sounds — Ilya reaches for strange English words, finally finds the one he wants — fond. So fond and confident and comfortable that Ilya thinks he could split open from happiness. This is not the Shane of 2009. This Shane doesn't have to cut himself into pieces, a hundred different Shanes for different situations. But Ilya isn't the Ilya of 2009 either. He's harder in some ways, softer in others, happier and sadder and more *himself* than he's ever been. He's so proud of both of them, the way they've grown together.

And right now, he's also very horny, and he wants very badly to do other things together.

"Go," he growls, and smacks Shane's ass for good measure. They're tearing off each other's clothes as they move toward the bathroom, just like old times when every hookup was like wrestling. Ilya turns on the shower and flicks water at Shane and Shane yelps and shoves Ilya against the wall, holding him in the spray even though Ilya's still got his underwear on and his pants tangled around one ankle. Ilya can feel his chest heave. He stares at Shane, feeling the hunger rise inside him: just like the first time, just like always.

"I love you so fucking much," Shane says helplessly, and then they're kissing and it's steamy and wet and they're pulling off the rest of their clothes and throwing them out of the shower. And they're running their hands over each other, skin slick with the hotel shower gel that smells so fucking nice because this is a nice hotel, and Christ, it just feels so *good* to touch Shane. His tits and his back and his ass and his thighs and his hips and his shoulders and his forearms: Ilya can't get enough. Shane's touching him too, and saying things Ilya can only half-hear because the blood is pounding in his ears. Shane's skin soothes him and makes him a hundred times hornier at the same time and they won tonight, they won together, and all their fucking dreams are coming true, the ones they couldn't even whisper to each other back then.

Ilya has to break away, because he's not sure if he'll start crying or if he'll just bend Shane over and satisfy them both right there. Shane is breathing so hard. The look in his eyes makes Ilya think Shane understands exactly what he's thinking.

Deliberately, Ilya drops one hand to his dick. He strokes himself slowly, watching Shane watch him. Shane licks his lips like he wants to drop to his knees right there. It's all so different than the first time, after the commercial, and also so much the same.

"Show me," Ilya says, and Shane blinks and starts to touch himself.

It's so fucking hot. The water jets down between them, steaming up the room. Ilya presses his back against the cool tiles and watches Shane do the same against the glass. The muscles in Shane's forearms work as he wraps his fist around his dick, pumping slowly. He's good at showing off for Ilya now, trusts Ilya enough to show him everything. It's like Ilya can feel his own pleasure and Shane's: the way the callus on Shane's thumb feels rubbing over the head of his dick, the rush of warmth when Shane squeezes his own pec.

Ilya groans and tightens his grip, lets his hand move faster. Shane's dark eyes are locked on Ilya's and it makes everything more intense. Ilya's whole body is tingling. His skin feels so sensitive.

"You were already getting hard," Ilya says. "Before I started touching myself. The first time."

"Yeah, because you were so fucking hot," Shane says. He rubs his other hand over his stomach, up his chest, up the side of his neck, like it's Ilya's fingers pushing into his hair. "I wanted you so fucking badly and I knew you knew it and I had no idea how to deal with that. Either part."

"And now?"

"I have lots of ideas," Shane says in an intense voice. "So many." He pumps his dick a little faster. "I wish this was your hand."

Ilya jerks his chin up. "Touch yourself like I would."

Shane's grip changes immediately, some shift Ilya can't describe really, but he can sense it. Shane responds to it differently too. He groans, deep in his throat. His back arches against the glass.

"Fuck," Ilya breathes.

"You do it too," Shane says, his voice thick. "Touch yourself like...like I would."

Ilya opens his fist a little. Shane is always careful with him, even when he's desperate, gentle with Ilya's foreskin and shaft. But Shane likes to play with his balls, so Ilya does that, both hands working. Pleasure floods through him, different than before, almost like it's really Shane touching him.

Fuck, it's so hot doing this with Shane. It's so fucking hot watching Shane make himself come, showing off for Ilya. Already Ilya's balls are tight, his thighs getting tense. He wants

this to last, but he knows it won't. They're both too on edge. But that's okay. It reminds him of their first time, Shane so horny and fucking wanting Ilya so badly and so mad about it, Ilya almost the same and pretending not to be.

"I can't," Shane says, and then moans. His hand moves quickly over his dick, squeezing a little. Ilya can tell how close he is from the way the tendons stand out in Shane's neck.

"Is okay," Ilya says, "I want to see."

Shane's mouth is open and his eyes are almost closed and his body is shaking. He comes hard, splashing across the space between them. Ilya groans and thrusts into his fist and then he's coming too.

"Fuck," Shane whispers. Ilya reaches for Shane and pulls him close under the spray, holding Shane while the water washes everything away, kissing him until they're not shivering anymore. They dry off with big fluffy hotel towels and put on big fluffy hotel robes lie on the bed, gazing at each other. Ilya thinks he could do this for a long time, maybe fall asleep this way. It's perfect.

After a minute, Shane gets up to wash his face with his special soap and brush his teeth, because he is Mister Discipline. Ilya brushes his teeth too and puts oil on his beard, just a little, just to annoy Shane, because he thinks the team is going to make Shane shave his. When he gets back to the bed, he drops the robe on a chair and gets under the covers naked. Shane joins him, putting his head on Ilya's chest.

"You know I did that commercial because I wanted to see you," Shane says. "It wasn't the money. It was you."

"I know," Ilya says. "I asked for you because I wanted to see you. And now look." He kisses Shane's head. "I get to see all of you."

Shane slaps at him gently. "So romantic."

"Yes, I don't think it's a secret that I love my husband," Ilya says.

"No," Shane agrees. "I think a lot of people suspect this."

"Good." Ilya strokes Shane's damp hair. "Then it will not be a surprise when soon we carry the Cup around the rink together."

"Is that your fantasy?" Shane teases.

"One of them only," Ilya says. "The rest you can hear about when you're older."

"Mm," Shane says. "About four weeks older, I'm guessing? After we win the Cup?"

"Yes, that's the plan," Ilya says. "Because if I have learned anything from your family, it's that you should always have a plan."

Shane laughs. "My mom would be so proud of you right now."

"Would she?" Ilya asks.

"I mean, for that," Shane says. "Not for...the other stuff."

"It's okay," Ilya says. "I'm proud of me."

"Mm, me too," Shane says. He cuddles against Ilya. "Thanks for this. It feels special."

"Go to sleep," Ilya orders. "In the morning: room service."

"I miss Anya," Shane mumbles.

"Yes, me too," Ilya agrees. "But we will see her tomorrow. The faster you sleep, the sooner you see her."

"Okay," Shane says, and then he's falling asleep, so relaxed in Ilya's arms. Ilya closes his eyes and listens to Shane's breath, gentle like a lullaby.

Chapter 5: Conference Finals

Chapter Summary

The only good thing about playing the fucking Admirals is New York pizza.

Chapter Notes

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

Of course they have to play the fucking Admirals in the conference finals. Of course. The only good thing about this is New York pizza and the fact that Harris makes a video of the team making Shane shave his beard. Of course, there are a thousand comments saying Shane has cursed them and now they'll lose, but there are at least five thousand comments that are happy that Shane Hollander's pretty face is back from the war or whatever. Harris puts some caption about new superstitions, since Shane has shaved after round two before. Ilya certainly isn't upset.

"Why couldn't it be Brooklyn?" Shane grumbles. "Or New Jersey? Even Columbus?"

"It is probably because they did not win their games," Ilya says, because he loves it when Shane gives him that look that says *why are you like this?* It's amazing how it works every single time. Hooking up with people he rarely saw more than twice was fun, but not as fun as knowing exactly how to annoy his husband.

"Fucking Scott Hunter," Shane says, stomping around their kitchen instead of drinking his breakfast shake. Anya lifts her head to look at him like she does not approve of such noises so early in the morning.

"I don't understand your problem with Scott Hunter." Ilya sips his shake. They're green today. He doesn't ask why. They taste okay.

"He's an asshole." Shane frowns.

"Okay," Ilya says. "You like those." He catches Shane on his way past, tugging Shane's t-shirt until he leans against Ilya. "You fought him. You barely fight anyone. What happened?"

Shane gives a big angry sigh, like Anya when she doesn't get her walk. "He knew about us."

"He knew?" Ilya blinks. Scott Hunter never said anything to him, all those times Ilya showed up at the gay club or the Kingfisher.

"Yeah," Shane says. "He told me I sounded like you. When I chirped him. I mean he didn't say your name, but the implication was obvious."

"Maybe he heard us," Ilya says. "At the first All Star Game. When you wouldn't let me fuck you."

"Yeah, or he was sitting right next to me at the skills competition when you skated by and gave me your room number," Shane says. "Not exactly your most subtle move."

"I couldn't text it to you," Ilya says. "I didn't have your number yet." He pulls Shane a little closer, so Shane is almost in Ilya's lap. "So now you don't want to play him, hmm? Even though he has nothing to say that everyone doesn't already know?"

"I'm allowed to be mad." Shane scowls.

"So is he." Ilya rests his chin on Shane's shoulder. "He's an old man and we kept him awake, probably. All that banging and moaning, oh fuck yes, Rozanov, touch my asshole, yes, more, more!"

Shane finally laughs and his smile is like sunshine. It warms Ilya all through. "Good. I hope we did keep him awake."

"Anyway," Ilya says, "if he knew, he never told anyone. Maybe it is time to admit you're mad because he's taller than you and his playoff beard looks very nice? So full, so shiny. Probably not too scratchy on his husband's thighs."

"You are absolutely the worst person I've ever married," Shane says. He pulls Ilya's hair until Ilya's face is tipped up to his. "The beard thing is just genetics."

Ilya nods. "Boring from your dad's side. Beardless from your mom's side. Good thing you have all those freckles." He kisses Shane, long and slow and sweet, and then smacks Shane's ass. "Go finish your smoothie. Are you trying to make us late to practice?"

"Mixed messages," Shane complains, but he goes and chugs his weird green smoothie.

Practice is good. There are a few missed connections, but overall, the team is functioning well together. Of course they're tired after such a long season, but everyone is energized by the wins. Plus, they've played the Admirals before, enough times to know that the Admirals are good, but they're beatable. There are rumors that Scott Hunter could be close to retirement, but there are always those rumors.

"We're going to assume he's not retiring before the end of next week," Coach Wiebe says with a smile. "Run that drill again for me, boys."

They run it again.

"You're ready," Ilya tells his team. "We can do this. We have everything we need to win. Give me everything out there and no one can take us down."

He's telling himself as much as he's telling them, but he pretends no one knows that.

Every game is a fucking battle. Ilya is in shape, of course, stronger than he's ever been, but he's exhausted at the end of every match, and he can tell the rest of the team is too. They're

giving him everything, just like he asked, leaving it all on the ice, but they're not clicking like before. They lose the first game — not so good, especially after the beard thing; they win the second — better. The Admirals win the next two, in New York, which is fucking annoying, because for some reason everyone still hates Ilya in New York and Ilya wanted to rub his victory in their faces. Harris keeps taking pictures of all of them and putting them on social media and Ilya thinks he always looks tired. He's going to have to start wearing his mouthguard outside the rink because he's clenching his jaw and it makes his teeth hurt. On the plus side, he and Shane are both too tired and distracted to be horny. They're focused so hard on the playoffs that the rink is all they're thinking of. The Centaurs win the fifth game.

"Two more," Ilya roars in the locker room. "Two more fucking games. Davai!"

They win the sixth game, but it's a fucking mess, and Troy gets in a fight, and the last few minutes of the third period are something like hell, everyone desperately trying to keep the Admirals from scoring a goal to tie while they're down a player. It works, but only barely. The whole team limps into the locker room without any of the usual noise.

"Hey, we fucking won," Ilya says, but even he isn't as loud as usual. "Act like it."

The team cheers and chatters, but it's weak. Ilya sits down hard on the bench next to Shane and starts to take his skates off, leaning his shoulder against Shane's for strength.

"It was a tough one," Coach Wiebe says. "But we can get them again. We'll be in our city, with our fans. I believe in you."

At least it was an afternoon game, so they fly home that night. Ilya gets to sleep in his own bed, Shane folded into his arms and their dog snoring on the floor. But the next day at practice, everyone is tense. Something is off. Troy is a little bit injured, but that doesn't explain it. Even Shane and Ilya are not connecting, and that's never happened on the ice. Pass after pass slides by just out of reach. Goals that should go in bounce off the posts. Ilya skates into the wall just to relieve some of his frustration, slamming his gloves on the glass. There are a couple of collisions that end in bumps and bruises and one split lip. The maintenance guy scrapes blood off the ice. At one point, they lose a puck, somehow. It's like someone put together a brand new team out of a bunch of strangers who only learned to skate last week. Coach Wiebe ends practice early.

"Get some rest," he tells everyone. He looks at each of them for exactly the same amount of time. Ilya knows that means that Coach Wiebe is trying very, very hard not to single anyone out. It's fine. This is on Ilya's shoulders, and everyone knows it. He's the captain.

He's coming out of the showers, tucking in the corner of his towel, when he sees Bood, Wyatt, and Troy standing in front of him. They're all still in their own towels, barechested, with wet hair, and they're definitely blocking him on purpose.

"What?"

"Do *not* ask me," Troy says. "I don't know why I'm here." He has one black eye from the fight, perfectly round, and he looks like a cartoon puppy named Spot.

"You're our sensitivity consultant," Bood says. "Ilya. My guy. I have to ask you something."

"So ask." Ilya folds his arms. Shane comes out of the showers behind him.

"What is happening here?"

"It's not an intervention," Wyatt says quickly.

"It's not?" Troy asks.

"Okay, it's kind of an intervention," Wyatt says.

"I'm asking this as your assistant captain and your friend," Bood says, reaching out to put one hand on Ilya's shoulder. "Are you two fucking? I mean, have you recently, since the regular season ended?"

"No!" Shane says. "It's the playoffs. Who the fuck do you think we are?"

"For the record, I think this is insensitive," Troy says.

"Noted," Bood tells him. "But not because it's homophobic in some way?"

"No, it's just fucking weird and personal," Troy says.

"Then we proceed." Bood looks at Ilya very seriously and puts his other hand on Ilya's other shoulder. Ilya worries for one or two seconds about all of their towels. Even that might not end whatever this is. They have all seen each other naked before a hundred times.

"Fucking tell me whatever it is you want to say," Ilya snaps.

Bood takes a deep breath. "We need you two to get nasty."

"What?" Ilya asks.

"For the team," Wyatt adds.

"What?!" Shane says.

"Not in front of the team!" Wyatt says. "Nothing like that. For the sake of the team. For the sake of all of us." He gestures at the locker room.

"You are fucking with us," Ilya says. Only he gets to make his husband so uncomfortable.

"I am extremely serious about this," Bood says. "The two of you have been off. Not just today in practice. The last couple of games. It wasn't that noticeable at first, because the two of you are fucking rock stars even when you're not playing at the top of your game, but yeah. It's happening. And when you two aren't connecting, it fucks everything for the rest of us."

"So you want us to fuck," Ilya says in a flat voice. "For the team."

Troy sighs like he's in pain, which he probably is, but like this conversation is adding emotional pain to the rest of his bruises.

"You don't have to...go all the way," Wyatt says. "If you're really superstitious. Just take some time tonight. Reconnect. Usually it's like the two of you are psychic and you always know exactly where the other one is."

"It's honestly very freaky," Bood says in a serious voice. "In the best way. So we notice when it's not happening, which is freaky in a less-good way."

"And you think if we have sex or whatever, that's going to fix it?" Shane asks.

Wyatt and Bood look at each other and nod a little. "It usually does," Bood says.

"Please tell me that there isn't some really weird calendar somewhere," Troy mutters.

"No, no." Wyatt waves one hand. "I thought this was a ridiculous idea at first too. But it's just obvious. That you two are. Um. Bonded."

Ilya will ask Shane exactly what that means later.

"Okay," he says slowly, "so you are asking us, for the good of the team, so that we win the game tomorrow and go to the finals, Shane and I should have sex, even if it breaks the superstition."

"Yes," Bood says firmly. "We talked it over and everyone agrees."

Troy winces.

"And you think this will fix us and the team," Shane says.

"Yep," Wyatt says.

"Wow," Ilya says, keeping his voice flat. "The power of gay sex. But what if they are having gay sex too?"

"I mean, they only have one out player," Troy mumbles. "We have three. If gay sex will save our season, the odds are probably in our favor." He looks like he can't believe he said that.

"Honestly, we were going to do this before this shitshow practice," Bood says. "But we were too worn out after the game last night."

"He means he fell asleep on the plane," Wyatt says. "Anyway, you don't have to. But think about it. For us."

"Every day a new experience," Ilya murmurs to Shane.

"Fucking amazing how that happens," Shane says.

"Okay, thanks for listening," Bood says. He claps Ilya on the shoulders and walks away, followed by Wyatt.

"For the record, I wasn't really part of any of that," Troy says, and leaves.

Ilya looks at Shane. Shane looks at Ilya. They agree silently to talk about it later. Half-naked in the locker room is not the place for such discussions. They walk to their stalls like nothing happened and get dressed, chatting with the normal, non-ridiculous members of their team who possibly weren't in on this wild idea, unless Bood wasn't kidding about talking to everyone. But no one else mentions it or gives them any weirder looks than usual. Ilya is very slightly relieved.

"Okay, so we're doing it," Ilya says as soon as they get in the car.

"Obviously we're doing it," Shane says.

"But like, maybe we have a nap first," Ilya says. "Because that practice was shit."

"Agreed," Shane says. "I want to be in a good mood when we...do whatever we do. Definitely a nap. Maybe some lunch."

"Lunch first," Ilya decides. "Then nap. Then...whatever."

They eat leftovers, chicken and this sort of risotto Shane made, and then take Anya for a short walk. Ilya can feel the tension simmering between them, anticipation like a promise. He reaches for Shane's hand and swears he feels a static electricity spark. Anya prances in front of them like she knows her papas are happy.

"Soon we will go to the cottage, Anya," Ilya tells her. "Will you like that?"

She ignores him, because she is a dog, and also because she speaks Russian.

"I'll like that," Shane says. He leans his forehead against Ilya's shoulder for a second while they walk. "Fuck, I need that."

"Soon," Ilya says. He kisses Shane on the head. "One more game to win this round. Then just one more round after that and we can take our princess to the lake."

"And we live happily ever after," Shane says. "Right?"

"Of course," Ilya tells him.

Back at the house, they strip down to their underwear and fall into bed. Shane wraps his arms around Ilya and pulls him close. Ilya's so tired he's asleep before he can count to five.

When he wakes up, Shane is kissing the back of his neck. Ilya hums. He likes being the one in control, of course, but he likes being taken care of too. Maybe he's the one that fucks Shane, but that doesn't mean that Shane doesn't take charge sometimes. It's nice knowing all he has to do is lie there and Shane will make him feel good.

"Ilya," Shane breathes in his ear.

"Da, lyubimyy?"

"Do you want to do whatever?"

Ilya turns over. "Yes, very much. Maybe more than I have wanted anything." He kisses Shane, slow and deep.

"I really have to pee actually," Shane says, because he is the most romantic.

"Me too," Ilya says. "Race you to the bathroom." He wiggles out of Shane's arms and runs to the bathroom. Shane follows him, laughing and swearing. They pee together, because why not, and leave their underwear on the bathroom floor, because also why not. Ilya wets his hands and rubs them over his dick, just in case, then washes his hands. Shane washes his hands too, because he always does.

"Now what?" Shane asks. "You get on your knees on this relatively clean bathroom floor and suck my dick?"

"Now we go back to bed," Ilya says, grabbing Shane's wrists and holding them behind Shane's back as he walks Shane backwards toward the bed, pushing with his hips. Shane gives him the horniest smile, like he's already fuck-drunk. Ilya can't help kissing that mouth. He pushes Shane down on the bed, spreading his body out on top of Shane's, because nothing makes Shane happier than Ilya's weight on him. Shane makes a noise like all the stress is leaving his body. His back arches, his hips pressing against Ilya's. Ilya can feel how hard Shane is.

"What do you want to do?" Shane says in a low voice, because he loves a plan.

"Mm, everything," Ilya says. "But maybe not too much. Save something special for after the finals, yes?"

"What was on the board?" Shane asks.

"No fucking," Ilya says, "no sucking, no frottage" — he makes it fancy with his voice, or tries — "none of that thing where you put it between your legs instead of in your ass. No toys. No fingers. No rimming."

"The legs thing," Shane says. "Outercourse. Let's do that."

Ilya kisses him like he's fucking Shane's mouth with his tongue, and fuck, Shane kisses back like he could swallow Ilya from the inside out. Ilya can't help grinding against Shane, even though it's too dry and it hurts a little. The feel of Shane's skin against his makes Ilya want to just thrust against Shane's dick until they both explode, not caring if it's comfortable. But this is supposed to make them feel good. This is supposed to connect them, to fix whatever is pulled tight between them. It should be good. So he holds still and just focuses on kissing Shane for a while.

Shane's mouth is so soft and so eager. He kisses, always, like his whole heart is in it. His mouth is a very bad liar, after all. Ilya loves the honesty of Shane's body. He loves the way Shane's mouth tastes, the shape of it against his, the hot flicker of Shane's tongue and the sharp edges of Shane's teeth. He loves the way the heat of Shane's mouth spreads through his own body, fire in his veins. Ilya has been so cold sometimes, on his own. Shane's mouth warms him up again.

Shane bucks under Ilya, his body rolling. He doesn't really want to get free. It's all part of the push and pull between them. Ilya has always understood this somehow: the way Shane says "no" when he means "yes" and the way Shane says "no" when he means "no". This is yes and yes and yes, more and more and more, please and thank you and right now. Ilya is too hard to think; his dick has all his ideas and they're all the same. He reaches for the lube in the drawer of the bed table. They haven't used it in weeks, so he put it away out of sight to be less tempted. Now he needs it. He rolls off Shane and Shane whines, but it changes to a happy sigh when Ilya pushes him onto his side and spoons up behind Shane.

"Do you want it?" Ilya asks in a low voice.

"You know I want it," Shane says. He sounds huffy. It's very cute.

"How bad?" Ilya asks.

"So fucking bad." Shane's eyes are closed. "They're right, you know? Something's been off this week. We had such a nice time in Montreal, but. Maybe it wasn't enough. It's so weird to just have scraps of you."

"It was okay before," Ilya says. "I won Cups. You won Cups."

"Yeah, when we were playing for different teams," Shane says. "We weren't supposed to connect on the ice then. And you weren't right there and still out of reach."

Ilya kisses Shane's shoulder, right on the scar. "You can reach me now, Shanya."

Shane turns his head and kisses Ilya hard, his hand around the back of Ilya's head. Ilya pops the cap on the lube and drips some over his dick. He's so fucking hard. He pours some into his hand and pushes his hand between Shane's thighs, slicking lube over Shane's skin. He loves the way Shane's legs squeeze around his wrist. It's easy to reach a little further and tease Shane's balls to make him gasp. Ilya wants those balls in his mouth but he doesn't want to stop kissing Shane. He wishes he had a hundred mouths to taste every part of Shane. He traces the seam of Shane's balls with his finger and rubs around the base of Shane's dick, just a light touch, until Shane moans into Ilya's mouth.

"God, Ilya, I fucking missed you."

"I ya," Ilya says. "Me too."

"Please," Shane says, and Ilya knows what he wants. He draws his hand back, spreads his fingers between Shane's thighs, and thrusts into the space there. He reaches over to wrap his hand around Shane's dick. Shane groans like he's going to come apart right then.

"Fuck, you feel so good."

Ilya doesn't have words. He grunts against Shane's shoulder. Shane's thighs are tight around him and it's making Ilya's whole brain and body melt. Every time he thrusts, Shane presses against him. Shane turns a little and puts his arm around Ilya so he can look at Ilya's face, like he's done so many times. The curve of Shane's arm feels like home. It makes Ilya's heart hurt, too full of love, too full of want.

Fuck, if he doesn't cum soon, he's going to lose his mind. Everything is so good and so much. Ilya leans to tease Shane's nipple with his tongue as he strokes Shane's dick. Shane swears.

"I want you," he pants.

"Yes," Ilya says. "Tell me."

"I want you to cum for me," Shane says.

"Fuck, Shanya." Ilya can't catch his breath. Shane's skin is so hot and so wet and the space between his legs is so tight. Ilya thrusts faster, losing his rhythm on Shane's dick, but Shane doesn't seem to care. His fingers dig into Ilya's back, telling him "go, go", encouraging Ilya to take what he needs. Ilya lets go of Shane's dick and locks his arm across Shane's hips, holding him steady so he can fuck Shane's thighs harder and harder.

"Yes, sweetheart," Shane says, "come on, that's it," but Ilya barely hears him. His whole body is fire and electricity and pleasure and he's so close, he's so close he can almost see it. Shane holds still for him, so good, and Ilya fucks against him and then he's over the edge. He sees fucking stars and fireworks and confetti and maybe he's having a stroke but it feels so fucking good he never wants it to end. Shane groans as Ilya's cum splashes his thighs, because he loves it even if he complains. He can't complain today: he asked for it.

Even before he can catch his breath, Ilya is pumping Shane's dick. He wants to make Shane feel as good as he does. He sucks Shane's nipple into his mouth and Shane moans. He's so fucking loud and Ilya can't get enough of the sounds Shane makes. Uptight, boring Shane Hollander makes noises in bed that Ilya has never heard and he loves every single one of them.

"Davai, Shanya," he whispers against Shane's skin. "Now you come for me."

"I'm close," Shane says, and suddenly Ilya wants more than anything to suck Shane's dick. He slides down the bed, rolling Shane onto his back, and takes Shane down like he's starving. Shane's dick throbs against his tongue, salty with precum. Shane's hands are in Ilya's hair. Ilya reaches up to squeeze Shane's pec.

"Holy shit," Shane says. He sounds like he's hypnotized or maybe high. "Holy shit," he says again, and Ilya can feel Shane's body tensing. "Ilya, baby, God, yes, I'm so...." He cums in a hot rush and Ilya swallows, just like he always does, because neither of them can ever get enough of the other. He lets Shane's dick slide out of his mouth slowly, kissing the head before he crawls back up the bed.

"Not too messy," he says.

"Worth it," Shane says. He's breathing so hard. Ilya stretches out beside him, back in the curve of Shane's arm. "I love you so fucking much."

Ilya kisses Shane's chest, almost his armpit, right where it always smells most like Shane. "I love you too. Now we are feeling relaxed, yes? Connected?"

Shane laughs. "I hope so, but I might still have to suck your dick later to make sure."

"Okay, I will probably let you." Ilya kisses Shane's armpit again.

"Probably," Shane agrees. "Because I have a good mouth."

"Yes, it's why I keep you around," Ilya says.

"Oh, is that why?" Shane asks.

"Yes, and some other reasons," Ilya tells him. "But mostly that."

"Good to know," Shane says. "Maybe I can have it engraved inside my ring. 'Good mouth'."

"I like this idea," Ilya says. "And I will get 'big dick'."

"And then we'll hope my parents never, ever see," Shane says.

They both think about this for a minute.

"Maybe we should just know that you have a good mouth and I have a big dick," Ilya suggests.

"I think that's a better idea," Shane says.

His hand is in Ilya's hair, stroking it. Ilya rests on Shane's chest. Something feels loose inside him that was tight before; something else that was stretched feels tight again, in the right way. He could put on his skates right now and it would feel like flying.

"We're going to win tomorrow," he tells Shane.

"Too fuckin' right we are," Shane says, sounding sleepy.

And they do.

The Ottawa Centaurs are going to the finals.

Thanks to **enoughslices** for the assist on "outercourse".

Chapter 6: Cup Finals

Chapter Summary

The Centaurs play in the Cup finals.

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya supposes it is inevitable that someone hears about Bood's amazing strategy to win games. Probably nobody talked about it on purpose, but a plan like that is always going to be overheard. Before the first round of the finals against Los Angeles, there is a new person in the media pool.

"Jenny Nguyen — I host the podcast Rainbow Tape where I talk about the intersection of queer culture and hockey. Can you comment on the rumors that your teammates asked you to ignore playoff superstitions in order to win the conference finals?"

The room gets very noisy for a minute and then very, very quiet.

"Yeah, I did shave my beard," Shane says, pretending not to understand. He touches his face to show how smooth it is. "That rumor is definitely true. I think it kind of speaks for itself."

"I was referring to the other rumor," Jenny says. "As the first married couple on a men's hockey team, you're facing a unique kind of pressure. Do you think your off-ice relationship strengthens your ability to play together?"

Ilya leans into the microphone. "You can't win without gays. It's science. Megan Rapinoe told us so."

"Jenny, with all due respect, that's not something we're willing or able to answer in the time that we've got today, but give our agent a call and we'll see if we can have a longer conversation," Shane says. "Uh, not about the superstition. We're not commenting on that. It's personal."

"Fair enough," Jenny says.

The rest of the press conference is basically just chaos.

They win, and win, and win again. It's easy. It's like all they have to do is be in the right place and the puck arrives exactly where they want it. Shane breaks a record for most goals scored in a season. Megan Rapinoe sends them a fruit basket. After they lose the fourth game and the fifth game, Shane shoves Ilya against the garage door and sucks his dick before they even get into the house. He's so fucking hungry for it that Ilya just leans back and lets him. There's

this thing that Shane does with his tongue that makes Ilya lose control. He fucks into Shane's mouth, holding Shane's head as they both groan. Ilya cums hard and Shane swallows him down, so thirsty, taking everything Ilya has. When they come in, Anya just wags, looking confused.

"To improve our communication," Shane says, wiping his mouth.

"I get it," Ilya says. "You need another dose of my medicine."

"Gross," Shane says, but he's smiling.

Ilya slides his arms under Shane's thighs and lifts him onto the kitchen island. It's a good trick, because it makes Shane wrap his legs around Ilya's hips. After that, it's so easy to pull Shane's knees over his shoulders when Ilya pushes Shane down and helps himself to Shane's dick. Jesus Christ, he loves Shane's dick: the silky skin, the vein on the bottom, the way the head feels against his tongue. One day he'll take his time, teasing Shane almost to the edge and not letting him cum. But not today. Today he's too desperate to hear Shane gasp his name, his hips bucking as he gushes into Ilya's throat.

"There," Ilya says, slapping Shane's stomach gently. "Now we have both had our shots."

Shane laughs, out of breath. "I don't think that's how that works."

Ilya pulls him up and kisses him. "Shh. Science." He remembers something he forgot to ask Shane. "What did Wyatt mean, when he said we were bonded? I looked up that word, but it has too many definitions."

"Oh, that's we're close," Shane says. "Emotionally. Physically. Like we're tied to each other in a way. It's hard to separate us and we're better together."

"I see." Ilya nods. He has an idea for later. Much later, unfortunately, but it's a good idea anyway. He puts it away in his mind.

"The beard is growing on me," Shane says. "Yours, not mine. You were right. It felt good on my thighs."

"Maybe you will see it again next year," Ilya says.

"I hope so." Shane hooks his legs around Ilya again, holding him close.

"It's okay, though," Ilya says. "Because if we don't make the playoffs, I'll take you on a sexy vacation."

"My consolation prize," Shane says. "But we're going to make the playoffs."

"Yes, definitely," Ilya assures him. "No question."

Shane smiles at him. "I think I like playing on the same team."

"It's okay," Ilya says, shrugging, and grins when Shane makes the face. "Let's win a fucking Cup, okay?"

"Too fucking right," Shane says, and even though he kind of sounds like Hayden, Ilya kisses him anyway.

They win the sixth game. It's not even close. It's like as soon as they go over the boards, Ilya can see every play in front of him, like it's already happened. They're in LA, but there are so many Ottawa jerseys in the stands, so many rainbow flags, so many posters that say "24 + 81". Shane's parents are there, looking nervous. He sees Svetlana, still wearing her Boston Raiders jersey, her hands cupped around her mouth so she can yell louder. It makes Ilya feel right at home, even if he doesn't entirely understand all of the signs. He swears the cheering makes him skate faster. He slides around the defenders like they're not there. The LA goalie is a sieve and the pucks fly past him. Wyatt is a brick wall at the other end.

It's the best game they've played all season. Even if the other team were putting up a fight, it probably wouldn't matter. The Centaurs are in charge the entire time. They win the whole fucking thing. Ilya falls to his fucking knees right on the ice when the buzzer sounds and Shane skates over and slides to him, putting his arms around Ilya. They hold each other and sob and the rest of the team piles on, one big mass of bodies.

"We did it!" Bood says. "We fucking did it, you fucking beauties!" He kisses Ilya on the cheek and then Shane. "Fuck! Yes!"

When Shane and Ilya kiss the Cup together, the roar of the crowd is like nothing Ilya has ever heard: louder than the gold medal match at the Olympics, louder than any Cup crowd. They heave the trophy over their heads. Ilya turns to look at Shane and he's so fucking in love he can't deal with it. Shane is crying but he looks so beautiful. His cheeks are pink and his eyes are shining and Ilya has never seen him smile so wide, even on their wedding day.

"We fucking did it," he says.

Ilya can't help it. He kisses Shane, and somehow the crowd gets even louder.

"Sorry," he whispers when he breaks the kiss. They haven't kissed in public like this before. Maybe hundreds of thousands or millions of people have seen Hayden's video, and Shane's Instagram video announcing their engagement, but Shane is so private about these things. They've never kissed for real at a public event, in front of people on purpose.

"I love you so, so fucking much," Shane says in a hoarse voice, and kisses him back, with tongue, as they hold the Cup. Ilya thinks maybe he will hear the ringing in his ears of the crowd screaming for the rest of his life.

They skate their circuit with the Cup and pass it off to Bood. Bood passes it down the line and they stand with their team in the middle of the ice and listen to the celebration. There are a few boos, but Ilya can hardly hear them. Anyway, he's heard it all before. It can't hurt him tonight.

Finally they let the friends and family onto the ice and Shane's parents are there immediately. "Boys! We're so fucking proud of you!" Yuna hugs them both, and then David too, and Ilya stands in the arms of his family and he only cries a little bit.

They go out with the team, because they can't not go out with the team. It's a little bit nice that they're in LA, because LA does not care so much about hockey, and that means they're less likely to get recognized. And that means that maybe, maybe, after a couple of beers, Ilya can convince his husband to join him on the dance floor.

"No!" Shane says. "You know I don't dance."

"Mm, so you dance with Rose and not with me," Ilya says.

"That was different," Shane says. "I danced with you at our wedding. Just not at the club."

"Also it kind of sucked," Rose says, because even though she couldn't come to the game, she came to the club. She looks a little bit blue, but maybe it's just the light. "I love you, buddy, but you know it did."

"Maybe you should dance with Rose," Shane suggests to Ilya.

"Oh, so you are always turning down threesomes, but you want me to dance with your best friend? When you know beautiful women cannot resist me?" Ilya makes his eyes big.

"Wait, who are you turning down threesomes with?" Rose asks.

"They're purely theoretical," Shane tells her, waving his hand.

"I could call Miles," Rose says. "He had to take off all those rubber face pieces, you know, so it took longer. But I'm sure he'd be glad to see you guys, or, you know." She raises her eyebrows. "See you guys."

"Definitely call him," Shane says. "I'd love to see him. But my no-threesomes policy is still in place."

"Too bad," Svetlana says behind him. "Shane Hollander is gorgeous. I have always said so."

Ilya hugs her so hard she makes a squeaky noise like one of Anya's toys. "I missed you," he tells her in Russian.

"Not as much as I missed you," she says back.

"Why didn't you come with the families?"

She sighs a little. "I didn't want to be in the way."

He leans back far enough to look her in the eyes. "You are part of my family. Always."

"Okay," she says. "Next time I'll come." She puts her head on his shoulder. "I'm so proud of you. Also I like the beard. It's kind of hot."

He takes a deep breath of her hair and her perfume and almost feels like crying, but not sad. "Thank you." He thinks the words hold everything he wants to say. He pulls himself together and spins her around and lets her go. "Now it is a party."

Shane hugs her too, much more gentle than Ilya. Svetlana kisses him on the cheek and Shane blushes. Svetlana smirks.

"It's so great to see you again!" Rose says to Svetlana, giving her a hug.

"Yes, you too," Svetlana tells her. "I can't believe it has been almost a year since the wedding." She reaches for Rose's hand. "Come on. We don't need these boring married men to dance."

"You're right!" Rose says. "We don't."

Svetlana smiles. "We'll have fun," she says. "Anyway, you owe me." She leads Rose to the dance floor with a wink at Shane and Ilya.

"Is that...something?" Shane asks. "Because I'm not good at flirting but it kind of seemed like...maybe?"

Ilya shrugs. "Either that or they are going to look at the men while they dance. We will know if they tell us. Now come dance with me."

"Okay," Shane says, even though he's only had one beer. He puts his hand in Ilya's and lets Ilya pull him onto the floor and then hold him close. Ilya is so fucking happy. The music pounds through his body and he's dancing with his husband and his friends are here and his team is here and he never could have imagined this when he was 15. The club, yes, and Sveta's always been there for him, but he never dreamed of Shane. Never dreamed about being more than the star of the team: being the heart of the team, or the lungs, some part that's important but needs everything else to really be alive.

He isn't good at whatever they're called. Metaphors. But he's good at hockey and he's good at loving people and he's good at having fun and he's going to do all of that.

By the end of the night, Rose and Miles and Svetlana have been introduced to everyone on the team. Svetlana and Rose are in a booth arguing about the New Jersey team with LaPointe. Miles is talking to Luca Haas. It looks like they're drawing on the bar menus and showing their art to Harris, who is sitting with Troy. Everyone is happy. Almost everyone is at least a little bit drunk. And in a dark corner, Ilya's husband is breathing on Ilya's neck.

"Guess what," Shane says. He is maybe more than a little bit drunk, but not so drunk that he will be sick later. Ilya feels the same, but he's better at dealing with it than Shane is. It's very good after all their months of thinking too much all the time, and also drunk Shane is very funny. Most of the time, anyway.

"What?" Ilya asks.

"The playoffs," Shane says.

"Mm, what about them?" Ilya asks. "They're over." He hears what he said and freezes. "Oh, fuck. They're over."

"Yessss," Shane says. "They are. Over." He looks at Ilya and licks his lips.

"We're going back to the fucking hotel right now," Ilya says, already opening his rideshare app. He texts Rose and Svetlana and Miles that they'll meet them for brunch in the morning. Rose responds with a wink emoji. Sveta sends about fifteen eggplant emojis.

If you have sex in the Uber, you have to tip 500% Miles texts.

They do not have sex in the Uber. But Ilya is thinking about it. He's definitely hard by the time they get to the hotel. Walking through the lobby with an erection is awkward, but at least Shane is in the same situation, and nobody seems to be taking pictures or anything like that. Anyway, at this point Ilya doesn't think it's a secret that he has sex with his husband.

Fortunately, this time, somehow Ilya and Shane ended up in a room together. Maybe it's lucky, or maybe it's that everyone knows what the end of the playoffs means. The door is barely closed behind them before they're kissing. Maybe Shane kissed him in front of the whole world earlier, but that doesn't mean he wants to do it all the time. Ilya tries to undo the buttons on Shane's shirt but it's taking too long, so he gives up and tugs it over Shane's head instead. He cups Shane's pecs in his palms and fuck, it feels good.

"Not fair," Shane says against his mouth.

Ilya makes a noise like a question, but he doesn't stop kissing Shane. He never wants to stop kissing Shane.

"Shirt," Shane says, and Ilya lets him take it off. He lets Shane undo his pants, too. They both know this isn't going to take very long. They're too desperate and too tired and too tipsy to make it last and that's okay. When they get home, when they go to the cottage, then they'll have the epic sex they deserve. Maybe even in the morning before brunch, they'll have some patience. For now, Ilya pushes Shane down on the bed.

"Clothes off," he says.

"There's lube in my liquids bag in my suitcase," Shane says, pushing his underwear and his shorts off. "Condoms in the inside pocket." Ilya grabs the supplies and a towel just in case. He tosses them onto the bed and takes off his clothes.

"What do you want?" he asks Shane.

"I just want you," Shane tells him. His eyes are wide and dark. They didn't bother to turn the lights on. The city shines through the thin curtains and puts stars in Shane's eyes. Ilya climbs onto the bed, pushing the towel under Shane's hips. Shane spreads his legs and Ilya moves

between them, bending to kiss Shane. Shane's mouth is hot and he tastes like beer and Ilya could kiss him all night.

He reaches for the lube and drips some over Shane's hole. It's been two months; he wants to take this part slow. Besides, he likes warming Shane up, circling Shane's hole with his finger until Shane relaxes, pushing deeper into him a little at a time. The way Shane moves against Ilya's fingers makes Ilya's stomach burn with desire. He's missed this so much, watching the way pleasure flows through Shane's body. Even though it's been a while, it doesn't take long until Shane can take three fingers.

"I need you," he says, gazing up at Ilya. "Now."

Ilya groans and pulls his fingers out of Shane. They're slippery and he wipes them on the towel before he opens a condom and rolls it on. He slicks his dick with lube, just in case, and pushes into Shane in one smooth slow movement. Shane moans, his hips shifting. He's so fucking tight around Ilya. Ilya thrusts slowly, every bit of friction making him shiver.

"God, I fucking missed you," Shane says in a shaky voice. "You. This."

"Me too," Ilya tells him. He leans down to kiss Shane. Shane's tongue and then his fingers are in Ilya's mouth and he sucks on them, letting Shane fuck his mouth while he fucks Shane's ass, because they're in this together. And it doesn't last long enough, it feels like they've barely started and he can already feel his balls tensing, but that's okay. He doesn't push the pleasure away. He lets it fill him up, every corner of his body, until he's tingling. He pants around Shane's fingers, desperate.

"Cum for me," Shane says in his sexy bossy voice, and Ilya does, his hips bucking against Shane's ass. As soon as he has control of himself, he's wrapping his fist around Shane's dick, pumping up and down the shaft, and it only takes a few strokes for Shane to cum too, moaning Ilya's name.

"Fuck," Ilya says, pulling out and collapsing on the bed next to Shane. He peels the condom off with shaky hands and ties it off. The trash is all the way across the room. Hotels are very stupid sometimes. He rests next to Shane for a few more moments, trading lazy kisses, and then gets up to throw the condom away. He picks up the towel and uses it to wipe Shane's chest and belly, leaving kisses on Shane's clean-enough skin. It isn't like Shane hasn't fall asleep covered in cum before. If Ilya has his way, it will happen many more times.

Ilya is very brave, so he takes the towel to the bathroom and washes his hands, wiping himself down with a damp washcloth. The lights in the bathroom are too bright, but the man in the mirror looks happy even if there are circles under his eyes. Ilya is glad to see this man. For too many years, he would not have recognized him. Now this is the Ilya he sees all the time.

"Ilya?" Shane sounds so sleepy.

"I'm here, Shanya." Ilya slides into bed behind Shane, pulling him close.

"I always need you," Shane says, sounding sleepy.

You have me, he wants to tell Shane, *all of me, forever, for better or for worse*, but he thinks Shane understands already.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks to **clumsy** for reminding me I wanted to work that Megan Rapinoe quote into this story. You can't win without gays!

Chapter 7: Rainbow Tape

Chapter Summary

A transcript from episode 81 of the hockey podcast Rainbow Tape.

Chapter Notes

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

(intro music)

Jenny Nguyen: Hey there and welcome back to Rainbow Tape, the podcast at the intersection of queer culture and hockey culture. Today's episode is a big one that people have been asking for for a while. That's right, Tapirs, we're talking to Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov of the Ottawa Centaurs. And I just want to say, before we get into it, we talked about this before we started taping, but I'm sorry for how awkward my question at that press conference was. I definitely crossed a line and it wasn't appropriate. Fortunately, they gave me a chance to clarify what I really wanted to ask. I also provided them with a list of questions before this conversation, so nobody is getting blindsided by any of the topics.

Ilya Rozanov: Many people are looking at me and wondering about how sexy I am. Also sometimes they are looking at my husband. So I understand why you had this question.

Shane Hollander: Not the point, Ilya. Thank you, Jenny. And I appreciate our fans for trying to defend us, but everyone can chill out now. Nobody needs to be canceled.

Not to go back to my original question, but kind of going back to it: how did the superstitions affect your playoff season, if at all?

SH: Hockey players have a lot of superstitions, some more well-known than others. Obviously there's the beard thing. People are going to notice if you don't do that one. Unfortunately, I think it's pretty common knowledge that one of us is better at growing a beard than the other.

IR: (leaning into the mic) It's me. I have a full and beautiful beard. Very shiny.

SH: Everyone is really interested in the sex one because it's provocative, I guess?

IR: For me, I don't care about superstitions. It is just a way to blame yourself when things do not happen the way you want. But when you are part of a team, you believe what the team believes. So, I grow a beard.

Right. But the sex one is, like you said, provocative.

IR: Yes, people are always interested in sex. And that is fair, because sex is very interesting.

SH: It's also very personal, especially when you're an out gay athlete in a sport that doesn't have a lot of those. Hockey can be very homophobic. I'm speaking for the men's side.

IR: Do the women have this superstition?

I honestly don't know.

IR: But if they do, then what counts and what doesn't count? Because I have heard people say, oh, hand stuff doesn't count, mouth stuff doesn't count, but sex is more than just oops, it's inside now. People who are only thinking about sex one way are very limited.

SH: I think it's more about what you're willing to give up in pursuit of the highest levels of your sport. Playoffs are such a tense time. You kind of want to know that you and your teammates are all in it together, in terms of the sacrifices you're making and the things you're committed to. You want to save your energy for the effort that the playoff takes. You want to avoid distractions.

IR: I am very distracting.

Back to the rumor, and I'd like to repeat that you both gave me permission to ask you about this.

IR/SH: Yes.

Your teammates encouraged you to break this superstition because of some play issues on the team.

SH: Yes, and it was incredibly awkward, and I hope we never have a conversation like that again, and I hope they're listening.

But also it made a difference for your team.

IR: Yes.

SH: Our play issues were resolved. I'll say that. I'm not confirming whether we did or didn't have sex.

That's fair.

IR: It was not about having sex or not having sex. It was about connection. Shane and me, we have a very good connection. We had to work on it for a long time before, when we were long-distance. Now we have to work on it a different way, because we are together in a different way. We are married. We live together. We play for the same team. I'm very happy we spend so much time together, but now we have to think about how our connection works in this situation. There are changes to make sometimes.

SH: Yeah, definitely. Physical intimacy is one kind of intimacy that we have access to, but it's definitely not the only one. The reason our team asked us about that is because, as awkward

as it is, it's probably still easier than asking questions about our emotional intimacy. We were both so focused on the work ahead of us that maybe we put our relationship to the side a little bit more than we should have. We're really lucky that our relationship off the ice is part of what makes our connection on the ice so good. We can't not be married during the playoffs just because we're teammates. That was a lesson we had to learn. We have to be married and be teammates, if that makes sense.

Yeah, it does. Your priorities have shifted.

IR: When we were not teammates, I tried to murder him every time we played against each other.

SH: Yeah, exactly. Me too. Because anything less than my best effort isn't honest. He deserves my best and so do I and so does my team.

So you never let each other win.

SH: In the words of my mom, I would rather die.

IR: I also think he should die instead of letting me win.

SH: Wow. Thank you. See that, that's true love right there.

IR: When I beat you, which I have done many, many times, I want to know that it's because I'm better than you are.

SH: Okay, well, if that happens, that will be why. And if I beat you, it will be because I'm better than you are.

IR: We will see. But now we play on the same team. So. Not a problem.

Speaking of the same team, can you talk a little bit about being out queer men's hockey players? I think there are a lot of obvious pressures. Is there anything that's less easy to see that's good or bad?

SH: Being with each other all the time can be good. He knows exactly what I'm going through and vice versa. Because we're facing so many of the same challenges day to day, it saves time and energy explaining it, and I think we're less likely to get bored hearing about the other one's day at work.

IR: (laughing) Speak for yourself.

SH: Being together all the time also means that we have to create space to decompress sometimes. Just to be ourselves, not to be hockey players. Fortunately, we've been able to expand our horizons a little. It helps that we have good friends.

IR: And our beautiful dog, Anya.

SH: And our pampered little princess, Anya.

IR: See, here she is.

She is very cute.

IR: Thank you.

This is my dog, Puck.

SH: I don't think of myself as a dog person, but he's adorable.

IR: He is a dog person.

What's the meme? Like this. Shane Hollander and the dog he didn't think he wanted.

SH: The what? Oh, yeah, that's kind of exactly how it happened, to be honest.

IR: I want to say something, and maybe Shane will be upset, but I will say it anyway. Yes, we are married. Yes, we have sex. Sometimes when people talk about this, they get upset. "Oh, they are gay, we shouldn't talk about that, it's too weird, maybe there are butts involved." But they are happy to see commercials with Shane in his underwear, looking very sexy. They are talking about my butt on the internet. When I had sex with women before, people said different things. "Ah, he is a ladies' man, he's such a player" and things like that. Most people thought that was normal to talk about, if I was having sex, who I could be having sex with. It should be normal to talk about now. Yes, fine, it's private and I don't share any specific details, but gay people, queer people have sex. It isn't disgusting or scary or too much different. Maybe it's very good, maybe it's not so good, but it is just sex. It's touching, it's feelings, it's that extra feeling you get when you see someone who matches you... (to Shane) what word do I want?

SH: Chemistry?

IR: Yes, chemistry. You feel chemistry and then you say, okay, I want more of this person. For me it's special because people do not understand it when this chemistry is not between a man and a woman. So it's normal and also it's special, both. The first time I came to Canada to play hockey, I met Shane and there was chemistry. I did not expect this. I did not want this. When I was growing up in Russia, I only heard terrible things about men having sex with men and women having sex with women. To want this, it was dangerous. People are killed for this. It was only secret and maybe shameful, not something you could have like a serious relationship. But I am lucky. I changed my situation. I changed my mind. I feel very proud to tell people that I love this man and to me that's very important. And for us, for Shane and me, we are physical people. We are professional athletes. Our bodies are very important to us. So. Maybe sex is one way to celebrate our love and our bodies. I hope we have a lot to celebrate. (to Shane) Are you upset, Shane?

SH: (quietly) I'm not upset.

IR: Okay. Good.

SH: I think that...physicality...is an important part of our relationship and it always has been, partly because of who we are as people. I mean, for a long time, we had a much more physical connection than an emotional connection. I think I can say that.

IR: Yes.

SH: But both of those aspects of our connection are important to us and to our performance. So.

IR: Also the team with the most out players was the winning team. Could be there is something there.

So what I'm hearing is that gay sex DOES win Cups.

IR: Maybe so.

SH: You could put it that way. (to Ilya) Stop winking.

IR: Maybe it is the gay love *and* the gay sex. Both.

SH: Yeah, hooking up won't necessarily win you the Cup.

IR: Well. You could try.

SH: (warningly) Ilya.

Do you think the visibility of your relationship, the success you have had in hockey, is that going to inspire more players to come out?

SH: I kind of hope so. I mean, when Scott Hunter came out, that was a big inspiration for us to try to make our relationship really work. Because we saw that we wouldn't be the only ones. We saw it was possible to be a queer hockey player and achieve at the highest levels. I really admire how Scott used the power of that moment to break down a barrier.

IR: Queer players, it's a challenge to the system. I mean, some people feel that way. It will take some time. Russian players will not be coming out, probably. Not everyone feels free. Me, I have a handsome Canadian husband. I am more protected. But I do not think they will call me to play in the Olympics again.

SH: I think it's a complicated question. Ilya and I are lucky, because we've mostly had great teammates who either supported us or didn't really care. Nobody's accused us of staring at them in the shower, nobody's used slurs in the locker room. Obviously that's not true on every team, maybe not even most teams. But for us, even from the other players, we personally don't hear too much of that. From the fans, on the internet, yeah, it's there, but they don't say it to our faces. And we didn't lose any endorsements, really, we still have a lot of opportunities inside and outside of the rink. But at the same time, I'm aware that other players aren't going to be given the same kind of respect.

You're Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov.

SH: Exactly.

IR: My face is on the cover of the video game.

SH: We have the money and the recognition to protect us. We can get away with more than other players.

IR: Did you know Shane was Rookie of the Year?

I did know that.

SH: Ilya.

IR: What? I can't brag about my husband?

SH: (sighs) The point is that other players might face more barriers than we have. More than inspiring anybody to come out, I want to inspire players, coaches, team staff, owners, fans, to educate themselves and to support players who might be outside of the norm. Aside from being a gay hockey player, I'm also an Asian-Canadian hockey player, and that's complicated my hockey journey sometimes, which I think you can probably understand, Jenny.

Yeah, definitely.

SH: I think what I want most of all is for every player to be accepted for who they are, even if or maybe especially if they're not the star.

IR: Also maybe you don't know you're gay if you haven't tried it.

SH: Ilya!

IR: Okay, but it could happen. Hockey players, we're not just one thing.

SH: That's true.

IR: And somebody hire Max Riley. He is very good. He could play, coach, whatever.

SH: And somebody hire Max Riley.

Max Riley, formerly of Team Canada, who came out as a trans man a few years ago.

IR: Yes.

SH: He coaches at our youth camps that we put on each summer to raise money for the Irina Foundation.

Do you want to talk a little bit about the foundation?

IR: My mother struggled very much with her mental health. I wanted to honor her and to help kids love hockey too. She was always supporting me. I want to do that too.

The Irina Foundation has given a lot to local organizations.

IR: (passionately) We will do more.

SH: It's important to both of us to provide opportunities and resources and give back to the communities that have supported us.

IR: (quiet sniffing) For me it's very personal. Very important.

SH: We want people to know that they're not alone.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

IR: Yes. Yuna and David Hollander, Shane's parents, they do so much for us and for the foundation. I am proud to be part of their family. I did not think I would ever have that love again, after my mother.

SH: (softly) Ilya...

IR: Coming out can mean you lose your family. But you build your own, where you find love. Now I have a new family. And there is so much love in our life, from the Hollanders, from our friends, from our team, from the fans. I'm very grateful.

Shane, any last thoughts?

SH: Yeah. I just...when I think about my life, about our life, I feel so f***ing lucky. Can I say that on your podcast?

I'll bleep it.

IR: He has been very well behaved today. He is a good boy.

SH: I'm not a dog, Ilya.

I have a little something for you both. It's just silly, but I give one to all my guests.

IR: What is this? It's cute. I like the rainbow sweater.

It's a stuffed tapir. They're kind of like a pig with a long nose? My fans call themselves the Rainbow Tapirs, because it sounds like "tapers", and because tapirs are cute.

SH: Thank you. I'll try to keep it away from Anya.

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today.

IR: I had a good time making my husband blush. Coaches, if you are listening, hire Max Riley.

SH: Thank you, Jenny. And let me know if you ever want to talk about Asian representation in hockey.

Oh, I definitely will.

That's all for this episode of Rainbow Tape. Join us next week when I'll be breaking down exactly how the Centaurs got that Cup and what they'll need to do to make it to the playoffs next year.

(outro music)

Chapter End Notes

Sometimes a story surprises you with an extra chapter. Did we need this? I don't know. But I felt compelled. And I did lift Ilya's line about superstitions directly from the [xkcd](#) that I saw the other day, so thanks, Randall Munroe.

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