

Your Mouth is Wine

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Your Mouth is Wine

by [girlofsalt](#)

Summary

He didn't know why he agreed to see Rozanov again. It was a bad idea for so many different reasons. It was risky, it was dangerous, and it would destroy them both if it got out. But there was something pulling him to the other man, a tug in his chest that Shane tried to ignore because he couldn't pretend he didn't know what it meant. If he focused, he could still feel the phantom touch of Rozanov's fingers on his skin, see the look on his face as Rozanov disappeared into a memory. Shane's memory. Both of them knew what it meant. Shane almost wished they didn't.

OR: Soulmates who touch each other's scars for the first time get to live through the memory of their soulmate acquiring them. For Shane and Ilya, being known so deeply by their rival is not the miracle everyone else says it is. At least, not for about eight years.

Notes

I hope this makes sense. I'm sleep deprived and trying desperately to break through some wicked writer's block. Also, this would have been so much smuttier, but I wrote this entire thing while in the living room with my parents, and that just felt...wrong.

I'm doing this strange combination of the show and the book, but everything should make sense to people who have only watched the show/only read the books.

Ilya

It was really no surprise that it happened to Ilya first. Hollander was not shy, not really, but he carried this...hesitation with him when they fell into bed together for the first time.

Uncertainty that Ilya could read on his face, a boy who'd never been with another man before, but was desperate to do a good job. A man who didn't know where to put his hands, but was happy to let Ilya guide him.

The sex was fun. Hollander was annoyed and flushed and desperate all at the same time, cheeks reddening underneath his freckles when Ilya teased him. When they were done, Ilya fell back onto the bed, huffing, and Hollander very carefully positioned himself so that they weren't touching. It would have been funny if Ilya hadn't already wanted Hollander's body pressed back against his.

"You were not bad," Ilya said, just to have something to say.

"Not bad?" Hollander responded, rolling his eyes. "You're such an asshole."

Ilya grinned, pleased to get a rise out of the other man. Not that it was particularly hard. Hollander was very uptight, which only made it more satisfying when Ilya loosened him up.

"I think you like it," he replied, reaching over to touch just under Hollander's stomach, only slightly above where he really wanted to go. Hollander shoved his hand away weakly, but only managed to push Ilya further down. Ilya's hand slid to his knee, and then suddenly Hollander wasn't underneath him at all.

It was hot. It was hot, and he hadn't had enough water. His coach had passed out Gatorade bottles to everybody before the game, but he couldn't stand the taste of the grape flavor, or the feeling it left on his tongue.

Ilya was standing on a plastic square in the middle of what looked like a field of dirt-- a baseball diamond-- his mind supplied. The sun was beating down directly onto his overheated skin, and there were people cheering loudly behind a metal fence. It was overwhelming in a way, but Ilya had gotten very good at blurring the rest of the world out until all he was focused on was the next pitch.

The sound of the ball against the metal bat was loud, and Ilya was running before the batter had even dropped the bat. He rounded second base and headed for third, one of his coaches swinging his arms widely to indicate that Ilya should keep going.

There was a woman standing with her fingers tangled in the fence, his mother, yelling at him to dive for the base because the outfielders had the ball and the third baseman was holding his glove up and go Shane GO.

They hadn't quite mastered the art of sliding into base yet, as young as they were, and Ilya didn't even attempt it. Instead, he threw himself wildly towards third base with so much force that he nearly slid right over it, digging his knee into the plastic so that he didn't fall right off.

The sharp burst of pain underneath his baseball pants was worth the cheers from the parents on the bench, even though he hadn't even made it home.

It wasn't until he was back on the bench that he caught sight of the rip in his knee, felt the sting of a cut, deeper than he would have expected, dribbling blood into the torn fabric. One of his coaches pressed a piece of gauze to the cut, cleaning it out with another boy's water bottle. Ilya tried to ignore the potential germs he'd just been exposed to.

"Ah, you'll be alright. Think of it as your first battle wound," the coach said, laughing. "You'll need some new pants, though."

"Rozanov?" Hollander's voice cut through the memory like a blade, and suddenly Ilya was back in bed, his hand tightening inexplicably around Hollander's knee. Hollander sounded concerned, maybe a little panicked, but Ilya couldn't be the one to comfort him when his own stomach was churning with anxiety.

"You played baseball," he said flatly, because he didn't know what else to say. When he took his hand away, there was a faded, barely-there scar on Hollander's knee.

"Barely," Hollander replied, his voice no more than a whisper. "I hardly made it out of Little League before I decided to focus on hockey. But you...you shouldn't know that."

"I did not know," Ilya said, though he could hardly hear the words. "But I lived it."

It was confirmation for both of them, speaking it out loud. Hollander's eyes grew almost comically wide, and he jumped away from Ilya like he would be burned if they touched again. Ilya's heart pounded so loud in his chest that he was worried Hollander would hear it. Everybody knew what a soulmate was, and everybody knew that, if you were lucky enough to find yours, you'd know it was them when you touched their scars for the first time.

It was the best way to understand your soulmate, they said; you could understand their pain by living it yourself.

Ilya knew he liked men as well as women. He knew he was bisexual. He also knew that this was a part of him that his family could never know, would never understand. His homeland, his town, they would crucify him. He would not be allowed to return to Russia if anybody found out.

These were things he had known, and yet shoved down deep where nobody else could find them. These were secrets that he would not share, would have no reason to share. But if his soulmate were a man...well, that was something that was not so easily hidden.

"We can't...we aren't...", Hollander stuttered, doing a much worse job of hiding his panic than Ilya was.

"Hollander," Ilya said harshly, pushing the waver from his own voice. "Is fine. Does not mean anything." *It couldn't* mean anything, so it wouldn't.

"What are you talking about?" Hollander asked, dragging a hand through his hair and tugging harshly on the roots. "You touched one of my scars; you saw how it happened. We both know what that means."

"No," Ilya replied. "It does not mean anything we do not want it to mean. It does not have to. Look." He reached out and grabbed Hollander's chin, ignoring the way the other man tried to jerk out of his hold, and turned Hollander's face towards him.

"Rozanov," Hollander said desperately. Earlier, Ilya would have welcomed the sound. Now he shook his head.

"We do not have to do anything about it. You had fun, yes? And I had fun. That is all it is. What is it you say? Friends with, ah, profit. We can be only that."

"Benefits," Hollander murmured, still wide-eyed and anxious.

"Da, benefits. No more than that. Understand?"

"You'd be okay with...with ignoring it? Acting like everything is normal?"

Ilya couldn't talk about this anymore. He couldn't act like this was something that existed, because if he started to acknowledge that it was there, he might start *wanting* it. Wanting would be dangerous. Wanting would be impossible.

"Ignoring what?" He said lightly, pulling himself out of bed. His clothes were, annoyingly, tossed in every direction. Hollander sat up in bed as Ilya collected his clothing and dressed quickly, needing suddenly to be back in his own hotel room.

"And you still want to....," Hollander trailed off.

Ilya shot him a quick grin, the one that always worked on girls in the clubs. The one that promised fun, and nothing else. "I will see you in October, yes? We can, ah, *benefit*."

Hollander still looked like maybe he was going to throw up, but he managed to nod at the door. "Let me check the hallway first. To make sure it's clear."

Ilya rolled his eyes. "*Goodbye*, Hollander." He managed to push the panic away until he was back in his own room, leaning against his door until he heard the latch click. He scrubbed a hand over his face.

"блядь."

Shane

He didn't know why he agreed to see Rozanov again. It was a bad idea for a lot of different reasons. It was risky, it was dangerous, and it would destroy them if it got out. But there was something pulling him to the other man, a tug in his chest that Shane tried to ignore because he couldn't pretend he didn't know what it meant. If he focused, he could still feel the

phantom touch of Rozanov's fingers on his skin, see the look on his face as Rozanov disappeared into a memory. Shane's memory. Both of them knew what it meant. Shane almost wished they didn't.

Rozanov, somehow, seemed completely unaffected. Of course he did. Shane had never seen him, on the ice or otherwise, look even slightly rattled. He skated the same way he spoke in interviews: confident, cocky, sharp. He hadn't even mentioned their...connection. Not that Shane had said anything either. Not that he wanted to. It was just, well, it was an impossible thing to ignore, try as he might.

He *should* have ignored Rozanov, too. Should have let the whispered room number slip right by him, gone out with some of the other All-Star players instead and pretended that he enjoyed getting drunk. Instead, the numbers *1221* were burned into his mind, and he knew that there was no way he was going to deny Rozanov's invitation. Even if it was the smart thing to do.

He regretted it when the asshole left him standing out in the hallway for nearly 20 seconds, shuffling his feet on the carpet and feeling his heart jump in his chest every time there was a sound down the hall. He practically shoved Rozanov back inside the second the door opened, sliding in himself and pushing it shut behind him. He glared at Rozanov, who seemed to find things more amusing than anything.

"Is someone chasing you?" Rozanov asked. Shane maybe wanted to kill him. Maybe he just wanted to put his hands on him.

"I'm standing out there like an *idiot*," he said instead. Rozanov's smirk did not disappear. Clearly, he did not understand how dangerous things were, how risky. Shane opened his mouth to tell him, clenching his hands at his side, but the longer he looked at Rozanov, the more the anger churning in his gut turned to something different, something...fluttery.

Seconds later, they were against a wall, Shane's hands tangled in Rozanov's hair. Rozanov's arms were strong, and Shane appreciated how tightly he could hold him, how easily he could throw Shane around.

"Come here," Rozanov grunted, and they tumbled onto the bed so that Shane landed on top.

"I can't get any closer," Shane murmured back, trying his best to avoid pulling any further away from Rozanov's mouth. The other man's hands were everywhere, heavy and warm and stoking fire across Shane's skin. Rozanov pulled his shirt off, exposing his *stupid* bear tattoo, and sending blood rushing straight towards Shane's cock.

He reached for the back of Rozanov's neck with one hand, trying to find a place to hold, to anchor him before he floated away, and gasped when Rozanov flipped them so that he was on top. Shane's fingers skidded over Rozanov's wrist, grabbing at his hands, pulling him closer and closer and closer and relishing in the weight of him until suddenly, Rozanov wasn't there at all.

Shane was in a kitchen.

There was a woman standing with her back to him, humming under her breath as she stirred something on the stove. Shane recognized the scent, but the word that came to mind was one he didn't know how to say.

"Mama," Shane said, and the woman turned. The light coming through the window shone against her head so brightly that it seemed like there was a halo around her hair. Her smile was wide and just as bright.

"Hello, Ilyushka. Home from school already?"

"Papa picked me up," Shane said.

"Ah," his mom replied. "And where is your father now?"

Shane shrugged. "He told me to come inside. He didn't come with me, but I saw Andrei get in the car before they left."

"I see," his mother said. Her smile dimmed for a second, but it was back so quickly that Shane barely noticed. "Well, looks like it's just us for dinner tonight. Would you like to help me?"

Shane nodded eagerly. It wasn't often his mother made dinner herself. She was always sick, and his dad would often tell him about how her headaches made it impossible for her to get out of bed. Sofia, their cook, made most of their meals.

"Come here." His mother lifted him onto the footstool next to the sink and gave him three carrots. "Do you think you can cut these into small pieces for me? Watch how I do it."

Her fingers were swift with the knife, practiced, and Shane was clumsy when she handed it carefully over to him. "I'm not as good as you," he said softly.

Irina smiled. "You don't have to be perfect," she said. "Small pieces are small pieces, no matter how you cut them." She watched carefully as Shane tried his best to copy her movements. He went slowly, as his mother instructed, but a sound in the driveway had him looking up before he'd stopped moving the knife.

"Ilya," his mother said sharply, reaching to stop him, but she wasn't quick enough. The blade cut through skin as easily as it had cut through the vegetables, and Shane jerked as pain burst through his thumb, blood staining the cutting board almost immediately.

"Mama," he gasped, pulling his hand to his chest. The knife clattered onto the counter, and Irina quickly scooped Shane off the footstool and instead sat him on the counter, reaching for his hand.

"It's okay, Ilyushka, let me see."

Shane tried not to make a sound as his mother examined the wound, seemingly blind to the blood dripping down her own hand. She ripped a paper towel from the roll on the counter and wrapped it around Shane's finger, ignoring the whimper he tried to suppress.

"It's not that deep," she said, retrieving a bottle of water from their fridge. "We just need to clean it out a little bit. Is that okay with you?"

Shane trusted his mom. He nodded. Irina smiled at him, tilting his chin up with her pointer finger. "Don't you worry, we'll get you fixed up in no time."

"But I ruined dinner," Shane said woefully. The thought made him feel sick. His mother was finally out of bed, finally well enough to cook, and Shane had ruined it. There was blood all over the cutting board, staining the tip of the knife.

Irina laughed. "Don't you worry about dinner. We'll just have to have dessert first tonight, hm?"

"Hollander?" Rozanov demanded, hovering above him. Shane's hand was wrapped tightly around his, thumb squeezing against Rozanov's. When the other man realized that Shane was back with him, he snatched his hand away, resting it instead, awkwardly, on Shane's chest.

"I'm sorry," Shane said numbly, blinking hard. Was Rozanov this disoriented after he'd lived Shane's scar? Shane hadn't noticed, but maybe he'd been too panicked to see it. It suddenly felt wrong to be lying here in a hotel room when, just seconds ago, he'd been sitting on the counter in what must have been Rozanov's childhood home.

Rozanov looked tense, his jaw tight as he examined Shane's expression. "You saw my mother," he said sharply.

For some reason, Shane wanted to lie. It was a stupid thought. Rozanov obviously knew which scars came from where- he'd know immediately that Shane was lying. It just felt too personal, suddenly, to have seen a glimpse of the other man's childhood.

"Yes," Shane whispered. "You cut your finger making dinner." Rozanov huffed, pushing off of Shane and flopping onto his back on the other side of the bed. Shane glanced over at him hesitantly, unsure of how to continue. Anxiety made a home in his chest, threatening to splatter his heart against his ribcage.

"She seems...very kind," he said.

Rozanov was silent for what felt like an entire minute. "Yes," he replied finally. "Very kind. Very, how you say, giving to other people?"

"Generous?" Shane provided.

"Da. Generous. Smart. Funny."

"That's nice." Shane said. He sounded like an idiot. Fuck, this was awkward. Rozanov did not seem inclined to continue what they had been doing, but he'd only spent seconds in the vision, and Shane was still slightly out of breath.

"Should I go?" Shane asked. "I feel like maybe I should go."

"Why feel like that?" Rozanov said, and it came out harsher than Shane expected.

"I didn't think, I mean, doesn't it feel weird for me to stay?"

Rozanov rolled back over, putting his entire weight on Shane. His brows were furrowed, lips pursed. "Did we not agree to ignore? We said the visions mean nothing. We keep going, okay?"

His voice was low. Despite the awkward turn the situation had taken, Shane felt heat stir in his gut once again.

"Right," he said, whispering. "Okay."

Rozanov slid his hand down, and everything else dissolved.

Ilya

They learned how to be careful in many different ways. They avoided being seen together, of course, convincing their fans of the rivalry so that nobody could ever imagine that there was anything more happening between the Voyageurs captain and the Bears captain. They did not mention their meet-ups to anyone, not to Hayden, not to Svetlana.

And they were careful in other ways.

It wasn't right for them to go on living each other's scars, not when they were determined to ignore everything it meant. Ilya was certain that neither he nor Hollander had ever even said the *word* soulmate. Getting that glimpse into each other's lives, into each other's *pain*, it wasn't meant for the two of them. Not the way they were now.

And they would never, Ilya was sure, go beyond what they were now. Even if the thought of one day losing Shane forever made him feel slightly sick.

They learned to avoid the scars they hadn't already touched. Ilya's hand and Hollander's knee were now safe zones, since you couldn't relive a vision once it had happened, but Ilya learned to avoid Shane's elbow, which wasn't exactly hard, and that specific spot near Hollander's hairline where the scar was barely visible. In return, Hollander avoided the notch on Ilya's ear and the old wound on his ankle.

There were accidents, of course. Hollander once curled his fingers into Ilya's hair and vanished into a vision of 12-year-old Ilya cracking his head on a cabinet. Ilya once grabbed the foot that Hollander was trying to kick him with, and got a first-person perspective of sliding into a drainpipe on a rainy day. They brushed off the visions as quickly as they could and tried to focus on...other things.

Time went on.

Some of Ilya's Boston teammates found their soulmates, bragging in the locker room about how their girls traced their injuries and kissed their scars. Ilya stayed silent when the topic of soulmates came up, which did not go unnoticed by his teammates. He weathered a lot of

teasing about jealousy, but some of his kinder teammates assured him that he'd find his soulmate soon.

Nobody could have ever guessed that he'd done so already.

Ignoring the connection between him and Hollander only got harder throughout the years. He meant to pull back, meant to lose himself in other hook-ups, but things were different with Hollander. They were better. Like an addict, Ilya found himself going back to Hollander over and over again.

At least Hollander did not seem to be having an easier time of it.

He no longer acted as though he was reluctant to see Ilya. He no longer tried to deny him. He answered texts and sent some of his own, even when Ilya was home in Russia and there was no chance of seeing each other in person.

Ilya knew things were getting dangerous. He was certain that Hollander could tell too. Yet neither of them had the courage to stop.

In their sixth year of, well, whatever they were, they ended up at Hollander's place, Ilya against the wall this time. They hadn't seen each other in months, and Hollander hadn't hesitated to respond to Ilya's text that night.

"I told you we would win tonight," Ilya said, panting against Hollander's neck.

"Fuck you," Hollander replied. "J.J. was out tonight. You got lucky."

"Aw," Ilya said, reaching up to run his thumb over Hollander's brow. "No need to be sore loser. Luck had nothing to do with it."

He realized at the last second that he'd grabbed Hollander's chin in the past, run fingers over and through his lips, and palmed his cheek while they were fucking, but he'd never touched Hollander this tenderly, never over the other man's eyes.

He was gone before he knew enough to pull away.

The ice was familiar. The sound of cheering in the stands, echoing off the high ceilings, was familiar. Ilya's stick was comfortable in his hand, and the boy he was facing was not as fast as him, he knew. Nobody on this team was. Ilya would get through their defenses easily.

He shut everything else out, focusing on the puck in the referee's hand. The boy across from him shifted on his skates. The puck dropped.

Ilya won the face-off.

He was right about the other team's defense. He and his mom had watched their games, analyzed their style, and Ilya knew every trick to get around their defenders. He passed to Adris, his left wing, and skated smoothly around the incoming defender. Adris passed the puck to Zole, who passed it back to Ilya, and Ilya took the shot.

Almost.

Their goalie was better than expected and blocked the shot, pushing the puck towards the corner. Ilya grunted, heading after it. One of their defensemen captured the puck and pulled his stick back, obviously hoping to clear it from their side of the rink.

Ilya only heard the stick hit the ice, didn't see the puck move. Pain seared across his face, and he was suddenly on his knees, though he didn't remember dropping to them. He cradled his face in his glove, but there was something dripping into his eye. He was dizzy, he thought, and desperately tried to gather his thoughts enough to understand how this happened. How did he get here?"

"Hollander!" Somebody was yelling, and then there were hands on his face. "Let me see son, come on."

"I'm alright," Ilya said numbly, flinching back when somebody prodded at his face. There was a dull ache in his head, pounding with every heartbeat, and yet made unimportant by the flashier, burning pain across his brow. "What happened?"

"Puck got you right in the face. You don't remember?"

"I remember," Ilya objected. "It's just...wobbly."

"Alright, come on, let's get you off the ice. Can you stand?"

"I'm fine," Ilya insisted, even though he really wasn't. He blinked, trying to clear his vision. Coach Hoapili laughed softly.

"Sure you are," he said. "We'll get that blood out of your eye in just a sec, alright? Your mom is going to take you to the doctor, get that head of yours checked out."

As they pushed him towards the bench, Ilya saw that his mom was already waiting there, eyes narrowed like she could examine the injury from where she was standing.

"Their center, Bodhi," Ilya said, suddenly feeling as though this was a message he had to pass on. "He's weak on his right side. Could be bruised. Tell Adris."

"Alright, Shane," his coach said. "How about we focus on getting some stitches in that cut, hm?"

When Ilya came back, his thumb was still pressed to Hollander's skin. Hollander's hand had captured his, pressing Ilya's fingers even further into the scar Ilya hadn't realized was there. He looked nervous.

"How old?" Ilya asked. He'd had his fair share of hockey-related injuries, but he'd been lucky enough not to take a puck to the face until he'd been drafted by the MHL.

"Fifteen or so," Hollander replied. "Before they made the cages mandatory for minors. Got 4 stitches, right in my eyebrow. Didn't even have a concussion though."

"You were dizzy," Ilya countered. His hand was still pressed against Hollander's face.

"For a minute or two," Hollander shrugged. "The hit felt harder than it was, I think. I was back to playing pretty quickly."

"How quickly?" Ilya asked, suddenly concerned. "They should not have let you play so soon after-"

Hollander cut him off. "Do you really want to talk about the injury I got playing hockey when I was 15 years old? Is that what you came here for?"

Ilya looked down at his mouth. Hollander was smirking slightly, an expression Ilya didn't get to see very often. His skin was overheated, cheeks still flushed. Ilya was covering one of them with his palm. Usually, the moments after either one of them lived the others' scars were awkward. Apparently, this wasn't going to be usual.

"No," Ilya replied. "Did not come here for that." He rolled over and swallowed Hollander's laugh with his mouth.

Shane

Rozanov's house was less than Shane expected. He'd seen the footage of Rozanov's sports car collection and assumed that that house would be more...extravagant. Expensive. No, that wasn't the right word, he supposed. The house was clearly expensive. But it wasn't as...*loud* as Shane thought it would be.

The lighting was dim but not too dark, exactly how Shane preferred it. Ilya's couch was huge, but it was comfortable. And his kitchen, well. It reminded Shane of the kitchen he'd seen once in Rozanov's memory. Sleek, yes, but homey, with a window over the sink.

Rozanov was making tuna melts.

"Is the ginger ale cold enough?" he asked Shane. Shane told him it was. "Did you like it?" he asked Shane after they were done. Shane told him he did.

It was a way of being with Rozanov that Shane wasn't used to. It was new, but it was comfortable. They watched hockey, though Shane felt like maybe that was more for his benefit than Rozanov's. He was pretty sure *everything* that was happening was for his benefit rather than Rozanov's. It was an odd feeling, but it made Shane's heart beat a little quicker, made the buzzing under his skin more obvious.

"You should stay," Rozanov told him.

Shane meant to say no. He meant to cite the game they both had coming up, their early practice times, and the inherent risk of staying even longer at his rival's place. In the end, he didn't say anything.

In the end, he climbed onto Rozanov's lap, tangled his hands in his hair, and kissed him until Shane's own mouth was numb.

Then he grabbed Rozanov's biceps, intending to pull him closer, and felt the raised skin on the back of his arm for just a split second before the light changed, and the feel of Rozanov underneath him withered away.

Somebody was yelling. No, not somebody. His brother.

Andrei was angry, like he always was these days, though this time his rage was directed towards his wife rather than Shane. Shane's father sat at the head of the table, pretending not to hear, and Shane tightened his grip on his fork, too nauseous to eat.

His niece, Natalya, was already asleep. Shane hoped that Andrei's yelling wouldn't wake her.

Andrei returned to the dinner table without his wife, sitting back down in his chair as though nothing was amiss. He nodded at his father, making only brief eye contact with Shane, but it was enough to make it clear that he wouldn't appreciate Shane's opinion on the matter. Shane stabbed his fork into his steak, biting down on his tongue.

"Well, it seems-," Andrei started, but Shane cut him off.

"You shouldn't treat Tatiana like that," he said. He hadn't really meant to say it. It was none of his business, he knew, and soon he would be on a plane back to America and thousands of miles away from Andrei and his relationships. It shouldn't have mattered, except that it did. Except that Shane could remember another fight, another voice, hurling abuse at Irina Rozanova rather than Tatiana. His father had always been so hard on his mother. Shane could not watch it happen again.

"I'm sorry," Andrei said, his tone making it clear that he was anything but. "Ilya, are you trying to tell me how to treat my wife? Father, did you hear? Ilya thinks he can tell me what to do in my own marriage."

"Ilya," his father responded. "Your brother knows best. He will treat his wife how he sees fit, do you understand?"

Shane clenched his jaw. His father had been getting worse and worse, less lucid every day, and yet somehow, in this moment, it was ingrained in him that a husband should treat his wife however he wished. It was certainly the rules that Grigori Rozanov had followed all his life.

"She doesn't deserve the way you treat her," Shane pressed on, though he knew it was a mistake. He could only imagine another bottle of pills, another fallen hand, another woman lying still and cold in her bed, leaving her children behind.

Andrei laughed out loud, and the sound was mean and harsh. "Who are you to tell me what Tatiana deserves?"

"She is the mother of your child," Shane replied.

Andrei stood, slamming his hands on the table. "What do you suppose that means? You believe that having my child should spare her from being punished when she does wrong? She is my wife, not yours. When you have your own wife, if you ever manage to do so, you can treat her however you want. You will not tell me how to treat mine."

Shane stood too, though he wasn't sure what he planned to do on his feet.

"Ilya," his father's voice cut through the tension, and both boys turned to see him stand, planting both hands on the table in a more controlled manner than Andrei had. "Sit. Down."

"Yes, Ilya. Sit," Andrei repeated. Shane remained standing, refusing to listen to either man. Andrei's face twisted with anger, and he snatched the glass from his placemat and threw it with as much power as he could towards Shane. Shane ducked, but it didn't much matter. The glass shattered against the wall behind him, and a piece embedded itself deeply in the back of Ilya's arm.

"Andrei," their father sighed, with less anger than he'd treated Shane with.

"I'm leaving," Shane stated flatly, ignoring the sting of his injury and the warmth of the blood dripping towards his fingers. "I hope she does too."

For the first time, when Shane came back to himself, he could still feel the echoes of Rozanov's injury on the back of his arm. Rozanov was watching him cautiously, expression blank, but Shane could have sworn that there was something in his eyes, something afraid.

"That one's new," Shane said carefully. They didn't often talk about their scars, even when they accidentally lived them. Shane didn't want to break the rules and push too far, but the memory was making him sick. He didn't know much about Rozanov's family, other than the love he had for his mother, but Shane was starting to get a sinking feeling that maybe she wasn't around anymore. Maybe Rozanov was alone with his father and his brother, two men who, from Shane's point of view, seemed more likely to hurt than comfort.

"Yes," Rozanov replied, equally as careful. His features were still schooled into that cautious, blank look. "I'm sorry. I forgot to warn you."

"Don't," Shane responded. "Don't be sorry. I didn't...mind."

Rozanov raised an eyebrow, the first break in that horrible, empty expression. "You did not mind? You did not mind seeing *that*?"

Shane felt a little like he was saying the wrong things, a feeling that had followed him around all his life. He flushed, realizing he was still sitting on Rozanov's lap, and made to get off. Rozanov's hands on his hips stopped him.

"Explain," Rozanov said softly. It was commanding, but it was not mean.

Shane took a deep breath. "I guess I don't mind...seeing more of you. Or, I don't know, knowing more of you. Your life, outside of hockey."

"The Shane Hollander wants to know what my *life* is like outside of hockey? I did not realize you thought about anything *besides* hockey."

Shane rolled his eyes. "Fuck off. Clearly, I think about *some* things." He nudged his hips forward slightly, hoping to make a point. Rozanov grinned like the Cheshire cat.

"Of course," he said. "Why don't you show me?"

Part of Shane thought, when they started moving, that he couldn't believe they weren't going to talk about what he had just seen. The part of him that came after, the rational, logical part, knew that they would never talk about it. That they couldn't, because that wasn't who they were. Soulmates would have talked about it. Two people doing their best to deny the soulmate bond? They could never.

The part of him that came after *that*? Well, that part of him didn't really have the ability to think.

At least, not until Rozanov moaned his name. Shane looked down at him, Rozanov's eyes glassy, his lips wet and swollen, and felt his own heartbeat in his throat. The sound Rozanov made was sinful. Shane couldn't resist responding.

"*Ilya.*"

It was only after they'd both finished that Shane realized just how far things had gone. Just how many of their boundaries had been removed, and just what this meant for them, for their relationship. It was his fault. He'd started it, talking about the scars, the memory. Rozanov had followed his lead, and it had been the wrong thing to do.

He pushed off of Rozanov's lap, ignoring the other man's attempt to call him back using his last name. It was too late.

"I forgot, there's a team meeting tomorrow. It's early. I should...I need to go back to my hotel."

"Hollander," Rozanov said lowly, and Shane refused to acknowledge all the emotion he heard in his tone.

"Thanks for the sandwich. It was good. I just have to go now. I'm, uh, I'm sorry."

He held off the impending panic attack until he was back at the hotel, locked in the bathroom, and with the shower on full blast to hide the sounds of his ragged breathing. He was sure, for nearly half an hour, that he was dying. That he'd ruined everything with Rozanov, and that he shouldn't have ever wished for *more* the way that he did. It was stupid of him to want anything else. It was impossible. He didn't realize he was crying until the tears soaked into the hand he'd clasped over his mouth.

"Fuck."

Ilya

"I am coming to cottage."

They'd been through a lot of, well, bullshit, in Ilya's opinion. After Shane left, after the tuna melts and the ginger ale and the *scar*, Ilya cursed himself for being so stupid. For thinking Shane would want to stay, for thinking he'd grown used to the idea of being soulmates. He resigned himself to giving the other man up, because he couldn't keep Shane in any way that mattered when Shane didn't want to be kept.

Then, fucking *Rose Landry* happened, and Ilya realized that he was never going to just get over Shane Hollander. When Shane told him that they'd broken up, Ilya was certain that Shane was actually going to tell him that they were over for good, that he'd lost his chance to have Shane Hollander forever. He was sure he'd been grinning like an idiot when Shane told him that he and Rose weren't *compatible*. He looked it up later just to be sure.

His father died. He confessed his love to Shane over the telephone, in a country that wouldn't have allowed it, in a language that Shane didn't understand. Shane broke his collarbone in a game against Ilya, on the day Ilya planned to end things with him, and invited Ilya to stay with him over the summer. Scott fucking Hunter won the Stanley Cup, and then he kissed his boyfriend on the ice.

Ilya told Shane he would come to the cottage.

Now he was here.

Away from the crowds, from the cameras, from the danger of being caught, Ilya watched as Shane began to glow. He carried Ilya's bags in for him, no matter how many times Ilya said he could do it himself, and held Ilya's hand when they toured the house, his fingers tangled casually in Ilya's. He smiled, more than Ilya had ever seen him smile before.

He laughed when Ilya pushed him down on the bed, said he couldn't treat the bellboy that way. And when Ilya pulled his shirt off, he smiled so softly in Ilya's direction that Ilya nearly melted.

That feeling stopped the second Ilya saw the scar looping around Shane's collarbone. A surgical scar, to be sure, still new, and closed with neat sutures. Shane stopped when he noticed Ilya's expression, softening on the mattress.

"I'm fine, Ilya," he said. "It doesn't even hurt anymore." He raised a hand and pressed his palm against Ilya's cheek. Ilya leaned into it, relishing the feeling. Not too long ago, they couldn't have been like this with each other. Shane wouldn't have touched him like this.

"I know," Ilya said. "I do know." In his mind, he knew. His heart, fluttering in his chest, was harder to convince.

"Would you...", he hesitated, worried that Shane would think he was crazy for asking. "I want to see it through your eyes."

Shane's brow narrowed, and he pushed himself up on his elbows. "What? Why?" He didn't sound like he was judging. It was more like he was curious, like he couldn't understand unless Ilya explained it to him. The only problem with that was that Ilya wasn't sure *how* to explain it to him.

"I don't...", he said, suddenly frustrated, "I don't know how to describe. I saw it before, from my view. I want to see it from yours because I want to, I don't know, understand, I guess. I want to know how it hurt. I want to see how the medic people treated you, and hear everything they said. I want to know what you were saying when they took you away."

"Oh," Shane said softly. Ilya ran a hand through his hair, tugging on the roots. The explanation wasn't enough. He couldn't find the right words to describe the feeling, the need, and Shane was going to think he was crazy. The words came better to him in Russian, but Shane wouldn't understand. He couldn't.

"Ilya," Shane said, tugging Ilya's hand from his hair. "It's ok. I understand." He pulled Ilya's hand towards his chest and let it hover just a few inches from his scar. "It doesn't bother me, okay? If you want to know, I want you to know."

"Okay," Ilya replied. He didn't realize he could ever be more grateful for Shane Hollander until this moment. "I want to know."

He moved forwards towards the scar, intending to only just brush Shane's skin, in case Shane had lied and the scar still hurt. Instead, Shane put his own hand over Ilya's and guided his fingers towards the wound.

The phantom grip of his hand on Ilya's stuck with him a little longer this time, even as everything else melted away.

Ilya was flying. There were people yelling in all directions, screaming as he overtook one of Boston's players, but none of it bothered him. He had the puck safely between his stick, and he could see the goal ahead.

Somebody smashed into him suddenly, checking him against the wall, and--how strange; it was Ilya's body there, but not his mind--Ilya Rozanov grinned as he stole the puck.

Ilya-in-Shane's-body, who was suddenly more aware of being in a scar memory than ever before, pushed off the wall immediately, trying to hide his own smile. It didn't take him long to win the puck back and skate back up the ice towards the Bears' goal. He would have made the shot too, he could tell, until another player slammed into him, driving Ilya down onto the ice.

Ilya was pretty sure he lost consciousness for a second, because sounds that had rushed out without him noticing were now rushing back in.

"Hollander? Hollander, look at me, please. Open your eyes, Shane."

Ilya opened his eyes for a brief second, only long enough to catch Hayden fighting Cliff Marlow and to realize that the lights on the ceiling above were much too bright. They were

like ice picks driving through his pupils.

"Hollander? Shane?" This voice was different, but Ilya placed it immediately. It was, well, it was himself, standing outside the circle of paramedics searching desperately for some sign that Shane was okay. Ilya remembered this, a strange feeling for somebody reliving the situation from another point of view.

"Is he okay? Tell me if he's okay."

Ilya tried to turn his head towards the voice, but there was something stopping him. Pain erupted right above his chest, crawling up his neck and down towards his stomach.

"Alright, Shane, we're going to move you now. Try to stay still."

Ilya didn't care to hear what the paramedics were saying, though he was sure his real-life counterpart was listening desperately.

"Tell him I'm okay," he said, or at least he was pretty sure he did. It seemed hard, suddenly, to move his mouth. "Ilya, they can see us." His fear of being seen, of being caught, was muted, but it was still there through the pain and the drugs. "Tell him I'm okay, please."

He didn't think anybody was listening to him. Paramedics talked over his head, his coach's voice following behind the stretcher, and somebody said they were calling his parents. Hayden was still yelling in the background.

They loaded him into the ambulance, and Ilya felt very, very tired. "Stay awake for us now, Shane," somebody told him, but Ilya couldn't help it. He closed his eyes and let the world fade around him.

When Ilya came back, Shane was watching him gently, still holding his hand. Ilya sat up slowly, certain he could still feel the pain in his chest and his head, and knowing logically that it wasn't really there.

"Are you okay?" Shane asked.

"That was...", Ilya started, "what is it? Confusing." Shane tilted his head, not quite understanding. "I was you when I was there," Ilya explained, "but I was also there as me. It was strange to see myself."

"Ah," Shane hummed. "Yeah, I'm sure that would be weird." He smiled though, like it was funny. Ilya did not feel like laughing.

"You were talking to me," he said. "I did not know. I could not hear you when you were on ice."

"That's right," Shane said. "I could hear *you*. I knew you were scared. Part of me knew that everybody was watching. I wanted someone to tell you that I was okay, so that you would stop worrying. And also so you would stop making a scene."

"I know," Ilya replied. "I understand now. I know what you felt."

Shane's smile grew, and he leaned forward to kiss Ilya softly. "It's nice, isn't it? To know somebody else like that?"

"Yes," Ilya replied against Shane's mouth. "Is nice." He brought a hand up to hover over where he knew Shane's scar was hidden at his hairline.

"Wait," Shane said. "It's my turn next, isn't it?" He pulled away from Ilya, dragging his eyes across Ilya's skin. "You can't be the only one to know me like that. I want to know you that way too." He reached up to cradle Ilya's chin in his hand.

"You do not want to. You should not, I mean," Ilya responded. The idea of Shane seeing through him, seeing all the ugliness in Ilya's life, felt like a fist wrapped around his heart. "The memories are not...nice."

He sounded stupid. He sounded ridiculous. If he didn't have Shane underneath him, and if it didn't feel so hard to breathe, he could have found a better word. He could have explained things better.

"Stop," Shane said quietly. He tugged at Ilya's arms until Ilya had no choice but to lower himself down until he was practically lying on top of Shane. "They're scars. They've never been nice."

"Shane," Ilya said quietly, but Shane didn't let him speak. It was almost strange to hear Shane speak so confidently, to be so certain. He'd spend years acting like asking anything of Ilya would be a crime.

"No," Shane said. "I want to know everything about you Ilya, including the reasons you've hurt. I want to understand you. That's what the bond is there for, right?" He moved his head slightly so he was looking straight into Ilya's eyes. His own eyes were wide and wet, and Ilya had always been helpless to deny them anything.

"You are my soulmate, yes?"

Ilya pressed his forehead against Shane's. Hearing those words from Shane for the first time settled something inside of him. The fist around his heart loosened.

"Da. Yes. And you are *my* soulmate."

Shane's nose crinkled when he smiled like this. "Okay."

"Okay."

"Good," Shane whispered. He leaned up to press a kiss to Ilya's mouth. Ilya felt slightly drunk off the feeling. "Now, please. We're on my bed for a reason, right?"

Ilya laughed. Then he pushed himself down Shane's body, and put his mouth to good work.

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