

Bite Hard

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Bite Hard

by [mcshrug](#)

Summary

Shane finds out he likes it when Ilya bites him. It's possible he likes it a little too much.

Notes

Clear communication? Acknowledgment of feelings? Not in my house. Get back in your hookup era, boys, and let's get weird about teeth.

Warnings for fighting, hockey violence and dental injury.

Can't quite put my finger on whether this was inspired by real life— no [particularly iconic incident](#) is coming to mind.

Shane spends the entirety of All-Star weekend just barely missing out on time with Ilya Rozanov.

He sees Rozanov on the ice, sure. He watches from the bench during the hardest shot competition as Rozanov waves his hands to try and get some more noise out of the Madison Square Garden crowd before turning and winding up for the slapshot.

The puck hits the back of the net so hard the twine nearly pops.

Shane is still watching as Rozanov whips around, checks the speed clock, and shouts in triumph to see *106.4* up on the screen.

Rozanov is grinning wide when he skates back to the bench, his blades throwing up snow as he skids to a halt in order to fist-bump a Bears defenseman. Then he turns and puts his elbows on the boards, leans in toward where Shane is sitting between an Ottawa guy and some kid from Anaheim. “Think you can beat, Hollander?”

Shane, who had been carefully avoiding staring at Rozanov’s face, reluctantly turns to look at him.

Rozanov is still breathing hard. He’s grinning, a little, and there’s sweat gleaming on his upper lip.

There’s a vein visible in his forehead. It’s the same one that pops out, sometimes, when he’s fucking Shane.

“Nope,” Shane says, looking away. “You should try me in the agility course, though.”

But *off* the ice— well, off the ice, Shane is busy.

The All-Star Game is in New York, this year, and unfortunately for Shane, that means he’s spending time in a city full of people he’s contractually obligated to let take photos of him.

That’s not to mention the multiple shoulder specialists he’s scheduled to meet with in Manhattan.

Shane spends the rest of the weekend shuttling from hotel to All-Star event, All-Star event to photoshoot, photoshoot to doctor’s office and then back to another All-Star event.

He sees the city lights mostly through tinted windows as he sits in the backseats of hired cars idling in traffic on the West Side Highway, rubbing absently at the twinge in his left shoulder, thinking of the snarl on Rozanov’s face as he’d wound up for the shot.

*

Late on the third and final night of the weekend, Shane gets back to the hotel around midnight. He has five hours until he’s scheduled to leave for his flight back to Montreal.

He's so exhausted that his hand feels impossibly heavy as he lifts it to wave at the woman behind the front desk on his way across the lobby and toward the elevator bank.

He presses his thumb into upward arrow, tries to look casual, tries to pretend he can't see out of the corner of his eye that she's clearly lifting her phone to take a photo of him.

The bell dings. The elevator doors slide open.

Ilya Rozanov, who is leaning against the mirrored back wall of the elevator with a pool towel slung around his neck, looks up from his phone.

Rozanov looks surprised, for a moment. Then he starts to grin. "Hollander," he says.

Shane hurries into the elevator. He ducks around the doors, plasters his back to the right-side wall, and reaches his hand out to stab frantically at the door-closed button.

He looks over to see Rozanov is staring. His curly hair is wet. There's a drop of water slowly trickling down his temple, toward his ear.

"She's watching us," Shane mouths at him.

Rozanov looks out of the elevator doors, which are now shuddering closed. "Yes," he says. "Good thing she sees you run and hide, like crazy person."

"I'm not crazy," Shane says, and pushes himself off from the wall as the doors *clunk* shut. Rozanov has turned toward him, by then. The movement abruptly leaves them abruptly face-to-face.

Shane's eyes drop to the grin spreading wider across Rozanov's mouth.

The elevator kicks into life beneath their feet, starts to rise.

"I didn't even know there was a pool in this hotel," Shane says.

Rozanov is looking at Shane's lips. "Is this what you want to talk about?"

Shane shakes his head, helpless. "I'm in 1412," he says.

Rozanov makes a noise of regret. "I am meeting agent."

Shane frowns. "At midnight?"

"Russian agent. Video call." Rozanov shuffles in even closer. "I will miss you," he says, and leans down.

Shane's lips part.

Rozanov smiles. He ducks in past Shane's open mouth, tilts his head. Sinks his teeth into the edge of Shane's jaw.

Shane's mouth drops open.

The pressure of Ilya's teeth deepens, just for a moment. And then it's gone, and the elevator is shuddering to a stop on floor twelve.

Rozanov steps away. He reaches up, drags his sleeve over the back of his mouth. As the elevator doors slide open, he drops his hand to reveal a carefully neutral expression.

"Good night, Hollander," he says, and steps past Shane into the hall, tugging the pool towel into place around his shoulders as he goes. He doesn't look back before turning around a corner and out of sight.

Shane stands there, without moving, and watches the empty hall until the elevator doors shut.

As the elevator shudders back into motion and starts to rise, Shane turns, catches his reflection in the mirrored wall behind him, notices he's forgotten to close his mouth.

When he lifts up his hand to touch at the side of his jaw, he can still feel traces of Ilya's spit drying in the slight indents left behind by his teeth.

*

A few weeks later, at a table in the back room of a sports bar in Montreal, a Boston-Philadelphia game is playing on the television mounted on the wall beside the table where Shane's having dinner with his teammates.

Shane makes an effort to work on his eye contact, to keep his focus on the conversation. That's easier, admittedly, during commercial breaks.

He's failing to keep his eyes off a Bears power play when Comeau, who is sitting in the chair beside him, leans over and nudges him gently in the shoulder. Team trainers must have had a talk with the guys, at some point after that hit in Columbus; Shane's noticed they've been extra careful about touching him, lately.

When Shane turns to him, Comeau nods up at the TV. "Good game, huh," he says.

"Oh, yeah," Shane says, ducking his head, picking up his knife so that he can concentrate on cutting into his grilled chicken. "Those guys really hate each other, huh?"

"For sure," the defenseman says. "Five bucks says Rozanov is dropping the gloves by period break."

Shane smiles. "Yeah, right. No way I'm taking that bet."

Shane's not actually watching the television, though— he's leaning over to the side, looking at a phone someone's holding out, nodding at a photo of their baby in a Voyageurs hat— by the time he hears Comeau say Rozanov's name again.

Shane straightens much too quickly. He tries, belatedly, to make it look like he'd just been excited to reach for his beer. "What?" he says, taking a sip as his eyes dart back up to see a scrum on the TV, a tangle of Philadelphia and Boston jerseys grappling at center ice. "What happened?"

“Rozanov got *decked*, dude,” Comeau says. “Some guy got him in the mouth with the butt of his stick. Man. That shit looked like it *hurt*.”

Shane swallows. “Think he’s okay?”

Comeau says, “Well, there he is.” The broadcast has now cut to show Rozanov on the bench, leaning back, grimacing as he talks to a trainer looking down over his shoulder. “He’s upright, at least.”

Rozanov lifts up one glove, pulls it off. He reaches up, bare-handed, into his mouth.

He closes his fingers around one of his front teeth.

“No,” Comeau says.

Rozanov yanks the tooth free.

“Oh my *god*,” Comeau shouts, half-laughing, half-creeping as he leans behind Shane’s chair to shout down the table for the other guys to look at the broadcast.

Shane, himself, has yet to take his eyes away. He watches as Ilya twists around on the bench, lifts his hand, deposits what has to be his front tooth into the cupped hand the trainer is holding out for him.

The trainer pulls back the hand, leans down to say something in Rozanov’s ear. Rozanov shakes his head, reaches down, grabs for his water bottle. Squeezes it into his open mouth. Swishes the water around for a moment before leaning down and spitting blood down between his skates.

And then he looks up.

Shane already knows what Rozanov’s heard. He knows what it looks like, when the coach is telling you you’re up next.

Rozanov stands up from the bench. He slings his leg over the boards. He leans down, spits once more under the bench, shoves his mouthguard into place, and hops out onto the ice with blood smeared across his smile.

“Didn’t miss a shift,” Comeau says, shaking his head as he sinks back into the chair beside Shane. “Fucking Russians, man.”

It takes Shane a beat too long to agree. “Yeah. Russians.” He had been busy wondering what the Bears trainer had done with the tooth.

*

Later that night, while Shane is brushing his teeth in his bathroom, he grabs his phone one-handed and pulls up his text conversation with Lily. He texts best like that, when he’s doing something else, when he can pretend to himself that he’s firing off a message on a whim, like

he hadn't been thinking it through for the entirety of his drive home and his shower and his shave. *That looked like it hurt.*

Shane is spitting into the sink when his phone buzzes against the counter. The notification asks if he wants to download a photo.

He jabs at the *yes* button so quickly the phone nearly slips right off the wet tile.

The image takes a moment to fill his screen. When it loads, he sees it's a selfie, with the frame tilted down far enough to reveal the top of Ilya's bare shoulders.

Ilya's looking at the camera, baring his teeth in a grin. His left eye is bruised, his lips swollen. There's a dark gap where one of his front teeth should be. He looks like he's just gotten out of a bar fight. He looks *dangerous*.

Shane's hand, unbidden, lifts from the counter, touches his bare stomach. Creeps down below his waist.

It takes Shane a long moment to notice the caption attached to the photo. *Kiss it better?*

Shane's eyes snap up to the mirror behind the sink.

The guy staring back looks sweaty, and a little ill. There's toothpaste on one corner of his mouth. He's got a hand clenched tight around the hard-on visible through his sweats.

Shane shakes himself. "Jesus Christ," he mutters to his hot-eyed reflection. "Get it together." He lets go of his erection and leans into the sink to rinse out his mouth.

*

Shane sees Rozanov again two weeks later, when they're standing on opposite blue lines across the Montreal rink as the Canadian anthem booms through the arena ahead of a Friday night puck drop against the Bears.

Shane's eyes keep flickering from the flag suspended from the rafters down to the ice, where the red of the maple leaf projected onto the rink is washing over Rozanov's upturned face.

Rozanov is chewing on his mouthguard where it's dangling from the corner of his lips. He's shifting slightly at the ankles, his skates tipping back and forth beneath him, like he's forcing himself not to charge forward right then and there.

"Jesus," Bennett mutters under his breath from where he's standing beside Shane. "That's one scary motherfucker."

Shane slides his gaze to the right to see Bennett eyeing the Bears line through his visor. The defenseman's holding his hand over his heart, the way some of the Americans on the team do, and his expression makes it look less like a tribute to the nation of Canada and more like he's clutching at his proverbial pearls. "Who is?"

“Rozanov,” Bennett mutters. “I mean, he was scary before, but *fuck*.” He drops his hand as the anthem ends and applause rises from the bowl of seats looming over them on all sides. The projection fades out as the arena lights pulse back to full brightness.

“Nothing we can’t handle,” Shane says, and offers his fist to Bennett for a bump before he skates forward to center ice.

Rozanov comes gliding in to meet him, torso already bent and stick already braced, mouthguard still dangling down his chin.

“How’re the teeth?” Shane asks, bending down to get his stick blade parallel to Rozanov’s on the other side of the dot.

Rozanov doesn’t answer. He just grins at Shane widely enough to reveal the gap at the front of his smile.

The referee is skating in, getting the puck ready. “You could afford an implant,” Shane points out, and leans in for the draw.

The tip of Ilya’s tongue flickers out through the gap.

Shane loses the faceoff. It’s not a particularly close loss, either.

*

There’s a scrum, midway through the second period, after a Bears winger gets a little too comfortable bumping into Montreal’s goaltender while battling for position in the crease. Shane surges forward when he sees Hayden throwing a punch, tosses himself into the melee and grabs at the first black jersey he can find.

He finds himself holding two fistfuls of Rozanov’s nameplate.

Rozanov turns, sees Shane. He grins at Shane through his mouthguard. Gets his gloves up and shoves at Shane’s shoulders.

It’s almost playful. It’s the kind of shove someone would give a kid trying to wrestle with them.

It’s not how anyone would treat an opponent they were taking seriously.

“Hey,” Shane yells, and shoves back, hard, with real force. Rozanov must not have been expecting it, because he almost falls off his skates entirely, crashes into the back of the guy wrestling with Hayden before righting himself and staring at Shane.

“Fuck you,” Shane shouts.

Rozanov steps forward and shoves Shane in the shoulders again, harder this time. Shane grabs for his arms to push him back.

And then they are twisting around on the ice, shoving at one another, grabbing handfuls of each other's jerseys, until Rozanov's face is breaking out into a grin so wide his mouthguard falls out of his mouth entirely.

And then there's a ref between the two of them, getting a hand on each of their chests, pushing them apart.

Shane lets go of Rozanov's jersey, lets the stripes herd him away. The adrenaline is still singing through his veins. He's breathing so forcefully he's almost panting with it.

It's not until then that he realizes he's smiling, too.

Rozanov, still grinning, looks at Shane over the shoulder of the official whose arm is still slung around his waist. "Okay?" he calls.

Shane nods, breathing hard. "Okay," he says, and looks down to see Rozanov's mouthguard discarded beneath his skates.

It's instinctive. Shane leans down, away from the ref who still has a hand on his chest, and scoops the chewed-up plastic from the ice.

It's not until he notices it's still wet with Rozanov's spit that he realizes that is a weird thing to do.

Shane looks up, mouthguard in gloved hand, to see Rozanov's eyes widening behind his visor.

*

Shane is slumped in the front seat of the car in the dark of the arena parking garage, engine off, keys in his lap, toes growing cold in his sneakers as he scrolls through his phone, when the screen lights up with an incoming call.

Shane winces, hits accept and then speaker, pages quickly back to keep scrolling. "I've been checking about the mouthguard thing," he says. "People are just saying I'm, like, Canadian. That I'm just nice. And it's all on me, not on you, I mean. You looked freaked out. That's all I'm seeing jokes about, that I'm nice and weirded you out." He pauses, realizes he hasn't taken a breath in a while, sucks in a few quick inhales to make up for it.

There is a bumping noise on the other end, probably a car door being pulled shut. Then a grumble like an engine turning over. "Hollander."

Shane slumps down further in the driver's seat, continues his obstinate scroll. "It should be fine. I think it'll be fine. I mean, it was just a mouthguard. It's no big deal."

A small exhale on the other end. Shane can't tell if it's a huff of frustration or suppressed laughter. Part of him wishes he could see Ilya's face; most of him is glad he can't. "Hollander."

“I know it was weird. But I’m kind of weird. At least, people already think I’m weird. If you just— I mean, if anyone asks, I think you could just make a joke about me being Canadian.”

Another huff. This time, Shane can tell Rozanov’s laughing. “You think they forget?”

“No. I just think—”

“You are comedian? You give joke advice, now?”

“Don’t be an asshole, I’m just trying to—”

“It was hot,” Ilya says.

Shane’s thumb stutters to a halt halfway through his next scroll. “I— what?”

“It was hot,” Ilya repeats. “When you told me to fight you. I liked it.”

The tips of Shane’s fingers are going white around the edges of his phone. “That wasn’t a fight,” he says. He is distantly aware his voice sounds strange. “It was a scrum.”

There is a rumble on the other end, a car engine starting to purr. “Your teammates,” Ilya says. “They were impressed?”

“What was there to be impressed about?” Shane mutters. “We lost.”

“Yes,” Ilya says. “After you fought big, scary Russian.”

“Fuck you.”

“Okay,” Ilya says. “Four-oh-three.”

Shane realizes that, without quite meaning to, he’s been drawing the phone closer and closer to his face. He taps off speaker and pulls the phone up to his ear, as if there’s anyone in the dark car to hear but him. “What?”

“My room,” Ilya hums into his ear. “At Ritz Carlton.”

Shane frowns. “What? Why would we go to a hotel? I *live* here.”

“Hotel makes mistake,” Ilya says. “I get suite, on separate floor. Away from team.”

“Rozanov,” Shane says.

“There is jacuzzi.”

Shane frowns. “How do you even know that word?”

Rozanov’s voice is so low it feels like the phone is rumbling against Shane’s jaw when he says, “Hollander.”

Shane stares blindly down at his dash, grips the phone tighter to his ear. “I can’t— that’s crazy. That’s so *obvious*. What if someone—”

“You blush when you fight,” Ilya says.

Shane wraps his fingers around the steering wheel, just for something to do with his other hand. “No, I don’t.”

“Yes,” Ilya says. “You do. You blush, like when you come.” His voice is getting even deeper. “Are you blushing now? Are you hard?”

Shane swallows.

Ilya’s voice is low in his ear. “Were you hard during fight?”

Shane’s gaze flickers upward, catches his own wide eyes in the rearview mirror.

Ilya says, “Four-oh-three. Back entrance. Text when you are here.” The line beeps twice, and he’s gone.

It takes Shane a long moment to lower the phone from his ear. It takes him three tries, after scooping his key up from where he’d tossed it into the passenger seat, to fit it into the ignition.

*

Rozanov is ready to open the door to the back entrance as Shane approaches the hotel, although when he pokes his head out into the drifting snow to peer into the parking lot he seems startled by the speed at which Shane is approaching.

“Whoa,” he says, and barely steps back in time to get out of the way before Shane’s barreling past him and into the stairwell, which has to be somewhere only staff are meant to be, given the harsh fluorescents and the carts heaped with laundry behind the stairs.

Shane skids to a stop, his wet sneakers sliding over the concrete, and rounds on Ilya. He waits until Ilya finishes shutting the door and turns back around to hiss at him, “This is *stupid*.”

Ilya lowers his hand from the door. His gaze drifts up from Shane’s scowl to his forehead. “You have snow in hair. You walked here?”

“I couldn’t just park in the hotel parking lot. Are you *crazy*? I left my car behind some restaurant down the road, because this is *stupid*.”

Ilya takes a step toward Shane.

Shane crosses his arms across his chest, in part to add to his obstinate look and in part to make sure he doesn’t instinctively reach toward Ilya. “I can’t believe you would tell me to come here, with your whole team here, in a hotel, in *my* city. After everything tonight in the game, and everyone talking about us on Twitter, what would you even *say* if someone saw me and—”

Ilya ducks in, so quickly Shane doesn't have time to flinch, and gets his teeth into Shane's jaw.

Shane stops talking.

Ilya holds him there for a moment, tightens the blunt pressure until Shane is shaking, just slightly, in his grip.

Then Ilya releases Shane, but he doesn't step back. He stands there, smiling, just far enough away he can look Shane in the eyes. "I am on fourth floor," he says, and points over Shane's shoulder toward the stairs.

Ilya's spit is already going cold where it's drying on Shane's cheek. It's making Shane feels out of sorts. It's making him feel the kind of low buzz beneath his skin he usually only gets from a glass of champagne.

He brushes snow out of his hair as he turns to follow Ilya's gesture. "Do you just want me to go first so you can look at my ass?"

Ilya's snort echoes through the stairwell. "Maybe you *are* comedian," he says.

*

The double doors to Rozanov's suite are waiting just outside where the back stairwell opens into the fourth-floor hall. Shane is only left exposed in the carpeted corridor for a moment before Rozanov is sliding his keycard into the slot, pushing open the right-side door and stepping aside to usher Shane past.

Shane walks into a sprawling suite, an open-plan expanse that stretches from where he stands by the kitchenette to the floor-to-ceiling windows on the other side of the room. There is a step down into this lower portion, where a plush, L-shaped couch is set around a glass coffee table. A large television, turned off, hangs to the right of the couch.

In the opposite corner, on a raised wooden platform set in a triangle between window and left-side wall, an empty hot tub waits.

"Is nice," Rozanov says. Shane turns back to see him carefully sliding the privacy latch shut over the door. "Yes?"

"Definitely," Shane says, toeing off his shoes. He unzips his coat, hesitates. He doesn't see a coat rack, and it's going to drip once the snow melts. "Is there a shower?"

Ilya's grin spreads slowly across his face. "Yes."

Shane feels heat pulse into his cheeks. "I meant— I just wanted to hang my coat up in there," he says, weakly. "It's wet. It'll make a mess."

Ilya stares at him for a moment. Then he laughs, a quick bark, and maybe it's louder than he meant it to be, because he immediately claps a hand over his mouth.

There's something childlike in the gesture, something that causes an uncomfortable twist in Shane's chest, but more importantly— he'd seen no gap, there, in the flash of Ilya's wide smile. "Hey," he says, frowning. "I thought you didn't fix the tooth."

Ilya shrugs. "Is temporary," he says. He bares his teeth at Shane, lifts his hand to tap his nail against the left front one. Now that he's looking, Shane can see it has a slightly different sheen from its neighbors. "I put it on, I take it off."

Shane hesitates. "Did you put it on for me?"

Ilya smiles at him. He reaches out a hand. "Give me messy jacket," he says. "I will hang for you."

Shane shrugs it off, hands it to Ilya, and watches him take it into a bathroom set opposite the kitchenette. Then Shane pads further into the suite on socked feet, takes the step down to wander past the couch and toward the windows. The view is spectacular. Shane feels obscurely proud, somehow, to see how pretty Montreal looks in the snow.

Shane's shin bumps against the coffee table. He looks down to see a bottle of whiskey and three glasses, one unfinished.

"You want some?"

Shane looks up to see Ilya standing behind the couch.

Shane's not sure what expression his face is making, but whatever it is, it's enough to lift one of Ilya's eyebrows as he says, "Had teammates over. They are jealous I get suite. Hotel says, is accident. They say, is because I am favorite."

"You don't even like whiskey."

"It was in cabinet."

"What'd you tell them, to get them to leave?"

Ilya leans forward, plants his hands on the back of the couch. Shane's eyes drop to watch his strong fingers curl over the cushions. "I say, 'I am going to fuck Shane Hollander in jacuzzi.'"

"You're an asshole."

"I say, 'He is nice. He is Canadian. He likes to suck my dick.'"

"Oh, fuck *off*."

"I say, 'He likes when I bite.'"

Shane's next protest stutters to a halt before it can make it all the way out of his mouth.

“I like how he looks, when I bite,” Ilya says. His gaze is intent. His fingers are drumming slowly along the back of the couch.

Shane swallows. “What— what do I look like?”

Ilya’s fingers stop moving. He studies Shane, for a moment, like he’s seriously considering the question. “You show things, on your face,” he says. “I see you thinking. When I—” He flashes his white teeth, mimes biting down. “Is like, maybe, you stop thinking. Just for one second, maybe two.”

Shane stares at Ilya. He says, too abruptly, “You can take out the fake one.”

Ilya tilts his head in the way Shane has come to realize means he is working on parsing some English phrase. “Fake one,” he repeats.

“The tooth,” Shane says. He can tell he’s blushing. “The fake tooth. You can take it out, while I’m here, if you want.”

Ilya isn’t grinning, anymore. For a moment he gives Shane a blank look, an expression Shane finds he can’t identify at all. “Is not pretty,” he says, after a moment.

Shane swallows. It feels impossibly daring to reach out, to touch his fingers to the edge of Ilya’s jaw. “I don’t think that’s true,” he says, quietly.

Ilya stares at Shane over his outstretched arm for a moment. Then he looks away, pulling his cheek away from Shane’s hand. Shane lets it fall.

“Okay,” Ilya says. He steps away from the couch, up and out of the living room, before disappearing down a hall Shane hadn’t noticed yet.

Shane, left alone and blushing by the couch, takes several deep breaths. If he was *really* alone, he might have taken them out of a paper bag. As it is, he’s forced to stop himself from hyperventilating all on his own.

He turns to step past the coffee table, walks toward the stretch of the floor-to-ceiling windows until the sparkling of the city lights fills his vision. He leans forward until his hot forehead hits the cold glass with a quiet *thunk*.

Shane doesn’t hear Ilya come back in. He just catches a flicker of movement in the window, in the reflection visible beneath the fog from his breath, a moment before he feels Ilya’s hands close over his hips.

He turns in Ilya’s grip to find Ilya is already sinking to his knees on the carpet in front of him, his hands still loosely cupped over Shane’s hips, his head bowed so Shane is looking down on his curls.

Shane leans back against the cold glass, looks down at Ilya. He’d taken off his shirt, when he’d left the room. Shane can see the muscles in Ilya’s back working as he reaches up to tug down Shane’s sweatpants and expose the black cotton of his briefs.

Ilya pauses, then, with his hands still on the waistband of the pants shoved halfway down Shane's thighs. He studies the front of Shane's briefs for a moment. Then he looks up.

His lips look glossy, the cupid's bow deeply defined. When he spreads them into a smile, Shane sees the dark gap where his front tooth should have been.

Ilya's eyes flicker back down to Shane's crotch. He lifts one eyebrow.

"Fuck off," says Shane, flustered. "I— I don't know why, I just—"

Ilya opens his mouth. He leans in. He clamps his teeth gently over where the ridge of Shane's cock is pushing at the cotton.

Shane goes so abruptly still that both his calves cramp.

Ilya increases the pressure, just barely. Then he relaxes his jaw, noses upward, closes another gentle bite higher up Shane's bulge.

Shane's feet are spasming with how tightly he's holding himself. There are sparks crowding at the corners of his vision. He's suddenly aware that it's been some time since he's successfully taken a breath, and that there's a non-zero chance he's going to faint. "Could I please sit down," he gasps.

Ilya releases the bite, leans back on his heels, tilts his gap-toothed smile up toward Shane. Then he rises, takes Shane's hand, and pulls him away from the window, back to the couch.

Shane has to force himself to remember how to bend his knees before he can stumble after him.

Ilya guides him forward, pushes him down onto the couch. Shane goes, sprawling sideways across the cushions, his head hitting the place where the couch arms form an L as he tugs at his shirt. He lifts his hips so Ilya, leaning down over him, can pull off his pants and his briefs as Shane wrestles his way out of the cotton.

"Hold on," Shane says, emerging from the fabric. It's a nice shirt, one of his best, and it still feels weird to him to spend hundreds on something so basic. He shakes it out, goes to fold it. "I just need to—"

Ilya kneels down on the carpet beside the couch. He places one hand on Shane's stomach, wraps the other around Shane's upper thigh. He looks up at Shane and smiles, big, with all of his teeth showing.

He leans over Shane and presses that smile to the side of Shane's bare dick.

The collar of the shirt rips in Shane's grip.

Shane can't even look to check the damage. He's staring wide-eyed down at Ilya, at the way those white teeth are gleaming against the skin of his dick.

Shane gets fully hard so fast he can see the swell of his dick pushing Ilya's cupid's bow upwards.

He can't possibly contain the little noise of despair that rips out of him when Ilya pulls back.

Ilya is rising off the carpet, then, clambering up onto the couch, throwing one knee over Shane's hips so that he can kneel over Shane's thighs and gaze down at him.

Shane's eyes drop, helpless, to where Ilya's dick is pressing against the front of his track pants.

Ilya says, "You are being good. You are being very still."

It takes some effort to move his gaze back up to Ilya's face. Shane coughs twice before he is able to croak out, "Thank you."

Ilya's hand reaches up to touch his own stomach. He slides it slowly down, cups the bulge at the front of his own pants as he stares intently at Shane. "Can you keep being good?" he asks. "Can you stay very, very still?"

Shane's face is so flushed he can practically feel the heat radiating from his cheeks. "Yes," he says.

Ilya smiles. "Good," he says. He slips his fingers under his own waistband.

Shane darts his gaze up in time to catch the way Ilya's eyelids flutter shut.

When Ilya opens his eyes again, his pupils are dilated. "Remember," he says. His hand is starting to move, up and down, beneath the fabric of his track pants. "Be good." He braces his free hand against Shane's upper thigh. He leans in, hand still working in his own pants.

He opens his mouth, lowers it until Shane can feel Ilya's hot breath on the head of his cock. He looks up to meet Shane's eyes.

Slowly, without breaking eye contact, he leans forward. He pulls his lips back from his teeth.

He opens his mouth over Shane's cock and slowly, gently, closes his teeth just under the head.

Veins pop out on Shane's arms as he digs his clenched fingers into the couch. A high, thin sound emerges from the back of his throat.

Ilya looks up at him. There's sweat gleaming on his forehead.

His tongue is on Shane's slit. His teeth are on Shane's dick.

He's keeping his lips peeled back, so that Shane can see the gap.

Ilya's shoulder starts moving. Shane can feel Ilya's arm shifting underneath him, moving against Shane's shin. Ilya's trembling all over, shaking with the effort of keeping his mouth

wide and rounded, his teeth out of the delicate skin of Shane's cock. And he's slowly, steadily, pulling at his own dick.

There is white edging at Shane's vision. He's forgetting to breathe again. It seems impossible. It seems like it would involve movement. It seems like maybe, if he moved, Ilya might bite.

Shane can see the muscles at the corners of Ilya's jaw pulsing with how hard it is not to bite. There's a low, grunting noise emerging from deep in his throat, like he isn't able to keep it down without closing it down.

He's drooling. Shane can see it.

Shane can feel it sliding down the side of his dick.

Another whine tears from Shane's throat. There's an audible ripping noise from the couch as the fabric splits beneath Shane's grip. His fingers curl into stuffing as he shudders and twitches and forces himself to keep his hips down on the couch.

But he can't help the way his cock is twitching up and into Ilya's teeth.

Ilya has been looking down, concentrating. His eyes flick up, then, to find Shane's. His face is bright red, now. He's breathing out his nostrils in gusts. The arm he's tucked beneath himself is moving faster.

His teeth tremble, just slightly, over Shane's dick.

Ilya's shoulder jumps. His eyes widen. A vein pops out in his forehead. His arm jerks once, twice, and then goes abruptly still.

He shudders, grunting, and comes like that, red-faced and short of breath, hunched over and drooling into Shane's lap, jaw shaking with the effort of holding his teeth around Shane's cock.

Shane gasps. The muscles in his stomach jump and shudder. His fingers spasm where they're clenched deep in the ripped cushion.

Ilya groans, shudders, goes still. He sucks in several noisy breaths through his nose. And then slowly, carefully, he widens his jaw and pulls away.

When he sits up and leans back on his heels, Shane sees he looks destroyed. His hair is in disarray. There's spit coating his chin. He's bright red, and panting, and there's sweat trickling down his temple.

Shane can't help it. He reaches down and closes his hand tightly around his own cock to find it's already wet with Ilya's drool.

Ilya doesn't tell him to stop. He just watches the slick, frantic movement of Shane's hand for a long moment before looking back up to meet Shane's eyes.

Despite the damp spot spreading across the front of his trackpants, Ilya doesn't look sated. His eyes are still wide, his breathing still uneven. "I want to bite," he growls. He pulls his hand out of his trackpants, reaches out, grabs Shane's right thigh.

"You can," Shane groans. Ilya's come is smeared over the fingers gripping Shane's thigh. Ilya's drool is dripping from the hand Shane has wrapped around his cock.

"I want to bite *hard*," Ilya says.

Shane grits his teeth. His dick is so hard he's shuddering with each wet stroke. There's barely any air behind the word when he gets out, "Please."

Ilya leans in, down, gets his hot mouth on Shane's inner thigh, sucks in a mouthful of delicate skin and sucks.

He bites hard.

The pain feels like a tug directly at Shane's balls.

Shane's eyelids flutter. He arches up from the couch, grunting in something close to panic with the force of it as his vision fuzzes and his cock jumps and spits come against his knuckles, one blurt and then another, the hot length of it throbbing right next to where Ilya's teeth are still sunk into his bare thigh.

Shane groans, wrings his hand under the head of his dick. "Harder," he grunts.

Ilya's jaw clamps down.

Shane's shout is wordless. The final twitch of his cock into his shaking grip is so dry it *hurts*.

It's only after Shane subsides back into the couch, boneless and panting, that Ilya loosens his jaw and slowly, carefully, removes his teeth from Shane's thigh. His mouth makes an obscenely wet sucking sound as it detaches.

His chest is heaving. Both of them are breathing forcefully it sounds like they've been doing wind sprints.

Shane looks down, open-mouthed, at where Ilya is still crouched over his legs. He pulls his hand out from where it had clawed deep into the couch, extends his shaking arms toward Ilya. "Come here," he croaks.

Ilya is staring down at Shane's thigh. He's still sweaty, still red, but he's not wearing the usual relaxed expression Shane is used to seeing after Ilya comes.

There's instead a strange look creeping over his face, another expression Shane can't label.

Ilya shakes his head, just a small movement, like he doesn't know he's not just thinking of doing it. And then he's lifting himself up, clambering off Shane's legs and down from the couch, recoiling from Shane's attempt to grab at his arms.

“Just— give me second,” Ilya says. He won’t meet Shane’s eyes. And then he’s backing off, stepping away, retreating naked from the room.

Shane sighs. He lets his head fall back to the arm of the couch.

It feels very cold, abruptly, to be lying there naked in this big drafty room in front of those tall, cold glass windows overlooking the snowy night.

He can already feel the tremors starting in his hands. Sometimes he hates the way his hands shake, after.

Sometimes it makes him wonder if all this is really worth it.

Shane squeezes his eyes shut. He gives himself a slow five-count. And then he forces himself to lift his head from the couch. If Ilya is planning on hiding in the bathroom until Shane sees himself out, Shane should probably be a gentleman and get moving.

He leverages himself upright, shifts to swing his legs down onto the carpet, wincing at the uncomfortable pull of the come drying in the hair on his belly. The shivering is shaking down into his calves, now. There is a hot ache beginning to bloom inside his right upper thigh. He’ll look at it later, he thinks. He is strangely loathe to check it now.

Shane reaches for his shirt, discarded on the other side. Finds himself poking his fingers through the ragged gap visible under the collar.

He drops the shirt, looks down at the couch, finds the hole he’d torn right along the back seam of the cushion. He wonders if the hotel will charge Ilya, for that. He wonders if he could offer to pay without freaking Ilya out ever further.

And then Ilya is back in front of him, dropping back to his knees on the carpet in front of the couch, putting one hand on each of Shane’s knees and pushing them apart so he can shuffle closer in between Shane’s legs.

Shane lets him do it. He looks down at Ilya’s fingers spread over his kneecaps and notices his legs have stopped shaking.

Ilya slides one of his hands off and reaches down, plucks up something he’d dropped onto the carpet beside him. He raises his hand, uncurls his fingers to show Shane the object in the center of his palm: a small, circular glass container with a black plastic top.

When he removes his other hand from Shane to unscrew the cap, Shane sees there’s some kind of jelly inside, a substance the texture of Vaseline.

“Salve,” Ilya says. He says it carefully, like it’s a difficult word, like it’s one he’s practiced before. “Good for bruises. Helps heal.” He dips two fingers inside the pot, drags them through the jelly. Then he pulls them out and looks up at Shane. “Is okay?”

“Okay?” Shane blinks at him. “Oh. Oh, yeah. It’s okay.” He obediently spreads his thighs wider, makes room for Ilya’s reaching hand, looks down to follow its progress. That’s when he sees the top of his thigh for the first time.

Shane sucks in a breath.

Ilya retracts his hand so quickly it's like he'd been scalded. "What? You are hurt?"

"No," says Shane, reaching out, catching Ilya's retreating wrist, holding it in place. "No. No, I just—"

He looks down again, at the bruise blooming over his thigh, at the indents of the teeth marks visible around the purpling edges.

The indents of teeth, with one missing.

"You can see the gap," Shane says, and his voice cracks on the last word. And then he is leaning down, getting his other hand around Ilya's ear, hauling Ilya's face in toward his.

Ilya comes willingly, meets him with his mouth open and his tongue ready to slip into Shane's mouth.

Shane closes his eyes and loses himself in it, lets Ilya lick at his tongue until the cold feeling is gone, until he feels flushed all over once more. When the first kiss ends Shane leans forward to chase another, gets his tongue into Ilya's mouth this time, lets Ilya suck at it until they're both panting again.

And then Ilya's hand is on his cheek, pushing Shane gently away.

He opens his eyes to find Ilya is smiling, somewhat sheepishly. "Hollander," he says, and wiggles the two fingers he still has coated in salve.

"Oh," Shane says. "Right. Sorry." And he sits back on the couch as Ilya settles back on his heels.

Ilya's fingers are warm, as they smear the salve over the bite mark at the top of Shane's thigh.

Shane isn't looking at the movement of Ilya's hand, though. He's looking at Ilya's face, at the oddly intent expression there. At the way Ilya is biting his lip, absently, like he's concentrating, like he's trying not to fuck this up.

"What's in the salve?" Shane asks him.

Ilya doesn't take his eyes off where his fingers are slowly massaging the bite mark. "Is Russian," he says. "It has..." He searches for the word, for a moment. "I don't know. Plants. Helps with bruises. My mother, she used to make for me, long time ago. I buy at markets, now, when I am home."

Shane's mouth goes dry. He has never, in all the time he's known Ilya, heard him mention his mother. He's barely heard him mention home at all. He's attempted to prod, but Ilya is very good at dodging questions, even if it sometimes takes getting his mouth on Shane's cock to shut Shane up.

Shane doesn't want to fuck this up. He just reaches out and closes one hand over Ilya's shoulder. "Thank you," he says, quietly.

Ilya pets one last stroke over the bite mark. He leans back, picks up the salve container, screws the lid back on. When he looks back up at Shane, his expression was solemn. "How are you?"

"I'm okay," says Shane, looking down at Ilya's expression, at the tight way his lips are folded over his teeth. The more he studies Ilya, the more he wonders— "Are *you* okay?"

Ilya looks away. "Of course. I am not one who was hurt."

Shane isn't entirely sure that's true. The muscles in Ilya's shoulder are so tense Shane can feel them quivering beneath his fingers. "I wanted it," he says, pressing his fingers gently into the tension he can feel at the side of Ilya's neck.

"Was too hard."

"I liked it."

Ilya reaches in to brush his thumb gently over where the salve is smeared high on Shane's thigh. "I could have made you bleed. I could have—"

"I've never come that hard before," Shane says.

Ilya stops talking. His thumb stops moving.

Shane, pressing his luck, traces a gentle finger over the hollow at the base of Ilya's throat.

When Ilya glances back up to meet Shane's eyes, he looks hungry. He leans up. Shane's lips are already parting to meet his.

The kiss is open-mouthed, but it's warm, and nearly chaste. When Ilya pulls back, he's smiling, just a little. He looks less tender, now, maybe less ready to shatter. "You know only thing better than salve for bruise?"

"No," says Shane. He feels an answering grin tug at the side of his mouth. "What?"

"Jacuzzi," says Ilya.

Shane laughs. "Well, if it's what the doctor orders," he says.

Ilya rises, extends his hand. Shane, grinning, takes it.

Ilya pours Shane a glass of whiskey while they're waiting for the hot tub to fill, laughs at the face Shane makes when he smells it, takes it out of his hand and sips at it instead as he leaves to wander into the kitchenette.

Shane sits, still naked, on the side of the hot tub, looks at the water bubbling up from the tiled floor. He leans down, places one hand flat over the rising surface, feels the steam tickle his

palm.

“Stupid hotel,” says Ilya from the kitchen. Shane can hear the *clunk* of a door being pushed shut, the sound of Ilya’s feet padding back across the tile. “No ginger ale.”

“For me?” Shane sits up, retracting his hand from the water. “I can’t believe you remembered. That’s okay, though.”

He turns to see Ilya, having rounded the corner from the kitchenette, standing frozen on the threshold to the living room. His eyes are narrowing. He looks angry.

Shane shifts nervously on the side of the hot tub. “What?”

Ilya says, his words clipped, “Your shoulder.”

“What? Oh.” Shane reaches his left arm around behind his back, gropes upward until his fingers graze the end of the tape stretched over his opposite shoulder blade. He supposes Ilya hadn’t gotten a good look at it, when he’d had Shane pinned against the window or belly-up on the couch. “It’s okay. The tape can get wet.”

“I don’t care about tape,” says Ilya. He still looks angry. “Is bad?”

Shane frowns, lowers his arm from behind his back. “It’s not a big deal.”

“Looks like big deal.”

“I got hurt on a hit back in October. I’m managing it.”

“Managing,” Ilya repeats.

Shane frowns. “Yes. Managing. You’ve got a problem with that, or something?”

“Is bad?” Ilya says, more insistent, like maybe Shane hadn’t heard the first time.

Shane hesitates. “You wouldn’t— tell your teammates, or anything, would you?”

Ilya gives him an unimpressed look.

Shane deflates. “Yeah, sorry, that was stupid. It’s not great. There are some torn ligaments. I’m probably going to get surgery this spring.”

“This spring,” Ilya says. “Not now. Why?”

Shane shifts uncomfortably against the hot tub’s edge. He turns away from Ilya, then, on the pretense of leaning in again to check the water temperature. “You know why. They name the Olympic rosters next month.”

Shane can hear Ilya’s footsteps approaching. He rounds to the other side of the tub and stops there, leans down to plant his hands on the edge of the tub as he stares at Shane.

“It’s not like I’m guaranteed to get another shot at going,” Shane says. “You must understand. You want to go, too.”

“You will make shoulder worse,” Ilya says.

“Maybe,” Shane admits.

Ilya doesn’t say anything else. He’s still frowning to himself, though, as he swings his legs over the side of the hot tub and slides in.

Shane follows, lowering himself down to the bench on the other side of the tub, sighing as he dips beneath the steaming surface.

Then he lets himself slide down further, letting the water rise over his shoulders and past his neck, over his chin and his pinched-shut lips until he’s submerged up to the nose with his half-lidded eyes open against the steam.

He only hears some of what Rozanov says, through his partially submerged ears. Shane gets his elbows back on the tiled bench behind him, raises himself back above the water to ask, “What’d you say?”

“Who hit you?”

Shane stops where he’d been shaking water out of one ear. He meets Ilya’s gaze through the steam. “Rozanov,” he says.

Ilya stares steadily at him. His face looks very angular, when his hair is slicked back like this. There is liquid, either condensation or sweat, pooling in the dip at the top of his mouth.

He’s so beautiful it’s hard to look directly at him, sometimes.

“It was Kovalev,” Shane says.

Ilya’s wet upper lip curls. “I hate Columbus.”

“Me too,” Shane says.

“Kovalev is dirty player.”

“Yeah,” Shane agrees. “He is.” And when he sinks down beneath the surface, again, he stretches his foot out until he feels his bare toes bump Ilya’s through the hot water. “Hey,” he says.

Ilya’s stare is wavering behind the curtains of steam. He shifts his foot closer until the side of it presses up against Shane’s. “Hey,” he echoes.

Shane hesitates. He thinks about not asking. Before he can quite decide if he should, he’s doing it anyway. “Why didn’t you get the tooth replaced? Permanently, I mean?”

Ilya looks at him. His mouth is closed, but for a moment Shane can see his tongue moving behind his lips, like he's testing if the gap is still there. "Is not pretty," he says.

"And you... want that?"

Ilya's bare shoulders rise out of the water as he shrugs. "Can be problem," he says. "For me..." His eyes flicker upward, the way they do sometimes when he's searching for an English word, like he's checking to see if he might be able to find it on the ceiling. "Is good, maybe, to look tough, more," he says, eventually.

Shane frowns. "Good for who?"

"Good for me. Good for back home."

Shane studies Ilya's face, the planes of his flushed cheeks, the swell of his full mouth. The long shadows his lashes paint over his pale skin when he lowers his gaze.

He doesn't say, *I don't think it will help*. He just says, "Okay."

Ilya's eyes flicker up and catch his. A smile tugs at the corner of his damp mouth. "You think it won't help."

Shane's laugh is involuntary, immediate. "No," he says, pressing wet fingers over his grin. "Not really."

Ilya dips his chin below the water, but Shane can tell by the movement of his shoulders that he's laughing, too. He emerges, smiling wide enough to show the gap, and says, "Is hard, to be pretty."

"I'm sure," Shane says, grinning.

"Ah, so modest," Ilya says, and leans in, uses a wet hand to chuck Shane gently under the chin. "You already know. Yes?"

Shane leans in to Ilya's touch, but Ilya's already pulling back, settling onto the bench on the opposite side of the tub, giving a dramatic sigh as he flings one wet arm out over the side. "Oh, well," he says. "Maybe we both date more girls. Helps make up for pretty."

Shane's smile drops.

Ilya is watching him. There's a little twist at the edge of his smile, like he'd been expecting it to hurt. "Won't be so bad, Hollander," he says. "Girls are nice. Girls don't bite."

Shane wants to say, *That's the problem*. It's not really even the beginning of it, though, so he doesn't say anything at all, just sinks beneath the water until he is fully submerged.

Below, with the thunderous roar of the jets pounding at his ears, Shane reaches blindly for Ilya. Finds the side of his knees, then a calf. Pulls himself through the hot water, dragging himself along the floor of the tub, and presses his face into Ilya's submerged thighs, feels Ilya's soft cock bump against his cheek.

He feels a hand press down on the back of his head.

Shane presses his closed mouth to the side of Ilya's thigh, right over where the bite mark would be on his own. He considers never coming up for air. His lungs are already starting to hurt.

Ilya shifts his hand, gets an underwater grip on Shane's hair. He gives it a firm upward tug, draws Shane back up toward the surface.

*

Shane is in the Montreal locker room ahead of practice a few days later, stripping down in front of the gear hanging on his stall, when Hayden says, "Holy shit."

Shane finishes pulling his t-shirt off and over his head, emerges to see Hayden staring at him wide-eyed from the stall beside him. "What?"

Hayden's eyes are still wide when he starts laughing.

Shane is frowning at him when Stedlund, strolling by, whistles and lightly snaps his towel against Shane's side. "Hollander's girl's got teeth," he calls on his way to his locker.

Heat pulses into Shane's cheeks. He looks down at his inner thigh, then claps a hand down, far too late, to cover the bite-shaped bruise peeking out from the edge of his briefs. "Shut up," he mutters, reaching for his pads.

"It looks like an *animal* got you, dude," Hayden says.

God, Shane hopes he didn't notice the gap between the tooth marks ringing the hickey. "It's not *that* bad," he says, tugging at the leg of his briefs for a moment before letting go and reaching for his shoulder pads.

Hayden shakes his head and reaches into his stall for his own sweater. "I didn't know you got down like that."

"I don't kiss and tell," Shane says. It sounds less suave than he'd imagined, when he says it out loud.

Hayden accepts the answer, though. "Gentleman in the streets, I guess," he says, and pulls his jersey down over his head.

From the other side of the locker room, Shane hears one of the guys shout, "Fight!"

That's a pretty common call from anyone who's close enough to see into the cardio area offset from the main locker room, where ellipticals and treadmills wait in front of a row of television screens. Ahead of weekend practices like today's session, when Montreal isn't playing, the TVs are usually tuned in to matinee games, and those generally draw the largest crowds of Voyageurs when someone's gloves are off.

Shane doesn't like to be interrupted in the middle of dressing; it gets in the way of his routine. He ignores the call in order to continue strapping on his shoulder pads. Then he's reaching into his locker for his leggings when he hears Rozanov's name.

Shane drops the leggings.

He turns and, without giving it another thought, jogs across the locker room to join the knot of guys gathering behind the ellipticals to crowd around the center television.

It's tuned onto the Columbus broadcast, for their afternoon game in Boston. It's the second period, play has stopped, and the cameras are focused on Rozanov, gloves off, circling with his bare fists raised.

"Who is—" Shane begins, and then the camera cuts to show Kovalev, raising his own fists, feinting a punch.

Shane stops talking.

"That dirty motherfucker," one of Shane's teammates says.

"Hope Rozanov drops him," says another, and puts a friendly elbow into Shane's ribs.

Shane manages to smile. He doesn't manage to take his eyes off the screen.

Rozanov and Kovalev circle, fists bobbing. For a moment it looks like it's going to be one of those sham fights, one of those ones where the guys hesitate for long enough that they can let the refs intervene and pretend that's the reason they never landed a punch.

Then Rozanov lunges in, ducks Kovalev's first swing, and decks him across the face.

Kovalev goes down, hard.

Even with the television muted, Shane can practically hear the crowd pop as the fans surge to their feet in the stands.

There's some light applause, mostly ironic, as the crowd starts to disperse back into the locker room. "Bet you're not too sad to see *him* lose," Comeau says as he passes Shane.

Shane wishes he had thought to put on pants before running in here. "Yeah," he says. "Pretty good fight." As he follows his teammates out of the cardio room he places his hand on his thigh, gets his fingers over the bite. It's not hot to the touch, not anymore, but Shane's thumb still automatically finds the gap between the tooth marks.

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