20 Questions

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20 Questions

by stabthroughme

Summary

When the Centaurs' plane to Florida loses their engine everyone's fine, except for Ilya who'd been scratched by a broken bottle in all the jostling.

Shane hears the news, sees the report of "non-life-threatening injuries" and panics. Somehow, JJ manages to get them both to Florida before the Centaurs' game starts.

Notes

Hi I'm back with more fic :D I read TLG and added this concept to my running list of fic ideas and now yall can have it! Enjoy Loonies!!

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya hadn't even noticed the blood when they'd landed. He'd sent the messages to Shane the, frankly, kind of embarrassing messages to Shane, then he'd started reciting the prayers he remembered from being a child, and now there were three EMS people hovering over him and making sure the tiny shards of glass from someone's in-flight beer bottle didn't shift too much. And shining a light in his eyes. He'd had concussions before, with the ringing in his ears and the fuzziness and this was *not* that, which seemed like good news.

"We're gonna take you to the hospital, get you all patched up," one of the EMS people said.

Ilya was vaguely aware of Harris swearing under his breath to Wiebe. "Shit who do we even call?"

Shane, he thought, but didn't say.

"Is it bad?" Ilya asked as they had him lay back on the EMS stretcher to make sure he didn't get too jostled going down the aisle. "Do I have to-?"

"Yes," Wiebe, Harris, Wyatt, Troy and the three EMS said simultaneously.

Ilya made a split second decision as they were rolling him down the aisle of the plane. He grabbed Troy's wrist and made *direct* fucking eye contact.

"Rozanov what-"

"You were right," he said calmly, firmly. "In New York. What you guessed, you were right."

He watched the vague admission land, watched Troy's eyes widen, and then his eyes flicked to Harris, desperately trying to comb through the paper versions of the files they had on every player, his broken laptop somewhere in the jostled junk on the floor of the plane.

"I'll call him," Troy said quietly.

Ilya let him go and was wheeled to the hospital.

They kept him overnight, teammates rotated in and out to keep him company.

"I left Hollander a message," Troy said when he and Ilya were alone. "Had to ask Price for his number, though," he sounded apologetic, and it took Ilya a moment to realize why.

He flailed his hand out trying to pat Troy's shoulder, the drugs that had numbed him made his normally perfect hand eye coordination leave the building. "Is okay, Price knows. Walked in on us at camp."

"Oh thank fuck, doesn't sound weird then."

"Still a little weird for *you* to ask him but..." Ilya shrugged one shoulder, the other still numbed from the stitches.

Ilya was cleared to play the next day, they spent the day at the beach and Ilya tried to figure out where his phone had ended up. Wiebe found it, and had set it up to charge in the locker room but it still hadn't turned on when he checked it before pulling the wrapped bandages off and starting to switch them out for adhesive bandages over the stitches. His shoulder was a little bruised but they were all superficial, and the sound of the locker room before a game settled Ilya's remaining nerves and the last ebbs of the adrenaline crash. His phone would turn on and he'd be able to call Shane.

The door to the locker room opened and Ilya frowned, checking the time they still had time before warm-up, the lineup would still be a fair bit away-

"Hollander?" Wyatt's voice pulled Ilya's focus from his gear in his locker instantly. "Dude how the fuck are you even geographically *here*?"

Shane was there, JJ behind him, looking *wrecked.* His eyes were brimming with tears and his hands were shaking.

"*Moy lyubov,*" Ilya said before he could think through anything, opening his arms and then Shane was there, in them, shaking apart and clinging to him. Ilya held him tight, protectively, like he could shield Shane from Ilya's teammates. He didn't look up, didn't want to see a hint of confusion or disgust or anything else in their eyes.

"I am okay," Ilya whispered into Shane's hair. "Five stitches, some scratches. I am *okay.*"

"They reported it as non-life-threatening injuries, didn't clarify. Said you were taken to hospital." JJ's voice was closer than the door to the locker room. Ilya looked up and found JJ standing to one side, Troy on the other, helping him shield Shane. Troy wasn't looking at them, JJ was looking at Shane with such concern... Oh *god,* when Shane had gone down *his* injuries had been vaguely reported as non-life-threatening and it had terrified Ilya.

Ilya slid his hands down and lifted Shane up off the ground, his boyfriend's legs wrapping around him. Ilya carried him to the empty, dry showers and closed the door firmly behind them.

"Sweetheart, I'm okay." Ilya set Shane down and raised his hands to cup Shane's face. "I'm okay. No concussion or whiplash, just some scratches. You leave more marks on me in one July day than this."

Shane sniffled. "You wrote like you were dying."

"I thought..." Ilya shook his head. "We *all* thought... and I couldn't leave you like we left things."

"Seems stupid," Shane muttered.

"Yeah." Ilya kissed Shane's forehead. "I'm sorry for worrying you."

"I'm sorry for being a dick."

"No," Ilya dismissed. "I've been... Trying. To figure out how to talk better, more open. Is harder than I thought." He kissed the bridge of Shane's nose, just below where his glasses sat. "I'm sorry."

"I love you," Shane whispered, voice cracking. "I can't imagine my life without you and I..." He hiccuped a sob and Ilya dropped one hand to wrap around Shane's waist and haul him impossibly closer. The other hand lifted Shane's fingers to the pulse point on Ilya's neck, where his steady heart beat away.

"I'm okay, sweetheart. I'm okay."

Shane stayed there, quiet, mind finally seeming to calm. His fingers twitched up and started to fiddle with Ilya's hair, his body going lax in Ilya's arms. "I'm sorry," he whispered after a few blissful moments of calm. "I should've just waited at the hotel-"

"I left for the hospital as soon as I could when you were hurt," Ilya interrupted. "And that was an injury we both knew would come at some point."

"Oh. Right." Shane pulled back and looked up at Ilya, watery eyes twinkling with mischief. "And I don't even get to experience you high off your ass."

Ilya grinned and did his worst Shane impression, "*Ilyaaa,*" he teased and Shane flushed. "Was cute. *Very* cute."

"I should let you go play," Shane said reluctantly. "Your team kinda needs you."

"My boyfriend needs me more right now," Ilya countered and Shane's rare soft, gooey, lovesick smile that appeared on the rarer still occasions when Ilya *could* call Shane his boyfriend stretched across his face.

"I'll be okay." He nudged his nose against Ilya's. "Can I watch or will that jinx you?"

Ilya hummed softly. "You should watch, will make you sure I'm okay."

"Yeah it will." Shane sighed and stepped back. "I'm sorry, though. For..." he gestured through the door to the locker room beyond. The locker room that was eerily quiet.

"Is okay. I am sorry for telling Barrett when you did not want me to."

Shane's rebuttal was instant. "*No*. No, this... This isn't the same as just telling him randomly. No one else would've called me."

"If it had been serious the hospital would have called you," Ilya said simply. "You are my medical POA." He shrugged at Shane's shocked face. "You are the person I am closest to, even in the public eye I do not have many friends besides you. And you know what we need to be able to do for our jobs. What I stand to lose if I cannot..." Ilya trailed off. "It does not matter. I trust you, and I know you would make the right choices if I could not."

"I *really* fucking love you."

Ilya smiled, wide and bright. He could've *died,* his teammates knowing how he felt about Shane felt... Well it still felt a little scary but *fuck* if he didn't feel a little lighter for it, after everything. If he had died, if they hadn't known, Shane would've been alone in his grief. Fuck, the league probably would've engineered some sort of fucked up send off from Ilya's biggest rival. They probably would have sent his body back to Russia and not listen to anything *Shane* needed.

"Now go kick Florida's ass," Shane instructed.

"Is Florida. They are worse than we are," Ilya joked.

Shane left the locker room and JJ followed after giving a respectful nod to Ilya. So JJ knew, and Troy knew, and the rest of the team was probably guessing.

"Roz what the fuck?" Wyatt asked.

Ilya took a deep breath and returned to his stall. "You can have one question before the game, then we focus. Pick it good."

There was some whispering behind him he heard a very confused and slightly annoyed Troy say "I don't fucking know" and Bood crossed behind him to whisper to the other side of the room.

"Okay! Question decided," Bood declared and Ilya turned to look at him expectantly. "What are you two?"

Ilya wanted to give a snarky answer, the answer that he would've given to protect them, protect *Shane.* Hockey players. But his team wasn't disgusted or angry or any of it. They were mostly confused, like they were trying to put together a puzzle and were missing a piece.

So he didn't snark, he answered honestly. "Together."

"What like, boyfriends?" Wyatt pressed.

"Mhm," Ilya hummed his affirmation and then held up a finger before they could ask more. "No. You already asked your one question."

"But-!" Dykstra tried.

"No. One. Question." He held up his single finger. "See this? One. One question. We have a game to play. We just went through some scary fucking shit and I am fucking tired of losing. We all are, but this is fucking *Florida.* They don't have any kind of natural ice or snow here. We can beat their asses in our sleep. We are a good fucking team, we can do this."

Shane had never really watched Ilya play before. He had one earbud in, listening to the coverage of the game. The presenters had decided him and JJ showing up was a show of support for their neighbouring team. Which, not entirely inaccurate.

But good fucking *god.*

Watching Ilya play in person was so *so* different from watching him on TV. From watching him at the All-Stars game. The asshole mask was so firmly in place that Shane could hear Bood and Barrett's laughter from his seat.

And then there was the one time Ilya had skated by where Shane and JJ were sitting. Ilya made a big show of waving to the people who still wore Boston Rozanov jerseys and those around them. But his eyes locked on Shane and he winked, quick, gone in a flash and *oh.*

Fuck, Shane wished he could watch Ilya play more in person.

"I still can't believe it," JJ muttered in French. "*I thought it was some sort of unrequited crush."*

Shane smiled, replying in French. "*It's not."*

*"Still, Hollander. Fucking **Rozanov**?"*

"It's mostly an act," Shane explained. *"Besides, it's... I don't know, it just works. **We** just work. Really well."* He smiled a little, private smile, eyes locked on his boyfriend in his stupid Centaur jersey.

"Were you ever going to tell me?" JJ asked. There was a tinge of hurt to his voice.

"I wanted to it's just... I've never actually. Told. Anyone." Shane winced a little and looked at JJ. *"My **parents** walked in on us, Hayden figured us out when he moved to Ottawa and told Jackie, Ryan fucking Price walked in on us. Troy Barrett guessed when Ilya came out to him as bi. Hayden's even had his fair share of walking in on us. Neither of us have ever actually had to tell someone. And Ilya respects you too much to manoeuvre a situation where you would walk in on us."*

"Does he do that for Hayden?"

Shane laughed. *"No! That's entirely Hayden's fault for not knocking."*

JJ grinned. *"Glad I won't have to see that."*

Shane turned serious for a moment, lightly shoulder checking his friend. *"Thank you, for figuring out how to get me here. For not... Being weird about it."*

"Oh I'm still weirded out a little," JJ admitted. *"I mean it's fucking **Rozanov**, Shane. But it's not any sort of like... Homophobia or anything. I just can't imagine anyone wanting to date that fucker."*

Shane smirked and grabbed a handful of JJ's popcorn. *"Oh he's a fucker alright.*"

"SHANE!" JJ exclaimed, mouth hanging open.

"Shush." Shane looked back at the ice in time to watch Ilya score.

"Well at least your man is good at hockey. Your children will have lots of talent."

Shane flushed bright red.

"Can I get your help with something?" Shane asked as the game drew to a close with the Centaurs taking the win.

"Of course, anything."

Ilya opened his hotel room, glad that JJ had agreed to share with Wyatt so Ilya and Shane could have a room to themselves. Shane met him at the door, and Ilya's brain simply ceased working.

Shane stood in the entry of the hotel suite in a Centaur's jersey. *Ilya's* jersey. It was *doing* something to him, not just his cock but his heart. Because Shane was wearing *his* jersey.

"Hi," Shane said, hands behind his back and a lollipop in his mouth.

"Fuck, you need to bring this to the cottage," Ilya declared, setting his hands on Shane's hips.

Shane hummed and smiled. "You like it?"

"Shane I want to fuck you in it more than I think I have ever wanted to fuck you before," Ilya declared.

"Okay but first..." Shane pulled Ilya into the main room of the hotel suite. Every possible surface, including the bed, was covered in candles. Fake ones, with thin plastic sheets that wavered from side to side to mimic the movement of flames.

And then Shane was on one knee, and for a moment Ilya expected Shane to pull out his dick like he always did when he went to his knees- But oh.

He'd told Shane that one day he would cover the dock of the cottage in candles and ask him to marry him. He knew Shane was talking, saw Shane pull out the ring, and the conversation that Ilya had said they needed to have bubbled up and out of him.

"I'm depressed," he said. He watched Shane tilt his head and frown slight, adorably, and god he hoped Shane wouldn't walk away but he *needed* Shane to know. "Not... Not suicidal, but... I don't... Feel happy, a lot. I feel it in the moment, but I know that should last, not be as short lasting as it is. I... I started seeing a therapist, she speaks Russian and that makes it easier but I am not fixed. I do not know if I will ever be fixed. So. You should know that. Before you ask me to..." *marry you.*

Shane stood and made Ilya look at him, Ilya wasn't sure when he'd looked away from Shane. He wasn't sure when he'd started to tear up.

"I love you, Ilya Grigoryevich Rozanov. I want to marry you, if you'll have me?"

Ilya grinned. "You learned my middle name?"

"It's on Wikipedia-"

"Yes." Ilya said. "*If* I will have you, Hollander you know I will." Ilya grabbed Shane and kissed his stupid smiling face.

Harris had finished telling his silly raccoon story, and Ilya was relaxed. Shane was sitting next to him, him and JJ were hitching a ride back to Ottawa with them, and Shane had held Ilya's hand through the takeoff and the silent first few minutes before Harris had begun talking.

"I still think you put the raccoon in the car," Ilya declared.

Harris gasped, his hand flying to his chest. "Ilya! How dare you!"

"I dunno, I've known you for like, ten minutes and I'm also pretty sure you put the raccoon in the car." Shane grinned.

"Well then, you can tell the next story!" Harris declared. Ilya bit the inside of his cheek to keep from smiling at how easily Shane had fallen into the trap.

"I don't have any-" Shane tried.

"Yes you do," Ilya interrupted.

JJ popped his head over the seat in front of them and grinned down at Shane. "Come on, Hollander, share with the team."

"Fuck you JJ."

"That's Rozanov's job," JJ said without missing a beat.

Shane huffed and turned away to hide his smile. Ilya loved it.

"Oh! I have one," Ilya declared. Shane's head whipped around with concern. "So when Shane went down against Boston he ended up at the hospital high out of his mind," Ilya began. "And I went to visit him."

"Like a good boyfriend!" Harris shouted.

"Ah! But you see, Harris, we were not together yet. Or well." Ilya made a so so motion with the hand not being held by Shane. "Sort of not together, sort of together. Is complicated. Anyway! Does not matter because he spent a good minute apologizing for not calling or texting me, with a concussion. And then he had a whole rehearsed monologue about wanting me to go to the cottage that summer and said it all like it was one word." Ilya inhaled and tried to mimic the way Shane had asked him to the cottage for the first time. He lost steam and exaggeratedly inhaled a gasped breath.

"Wait that was 2017," Luca said from further back.

"Point Haas for random hockey trivia," Ilya joked and tossed one of the little chocolates he kept in his bag to Luca.

"You've been together since 2017?" Troy asked from the seat a few rows up, next to Harris.

Ilya looked at the two of them, so close together, and at the recognition of what how year's season had ended. Shane had told him about sitting on the couch with his parents and watching Scott kiss Kip, how he'd felt the shift when Scott had simply pulled him onto the ice the first time, that it felt different. That it didn't feel random. And how that kiss had shifted what was possible in Shane's mind just as it had Ilya's. How it probably had shifted Troy's and Harris' too.

"Depends on how you classify it," Shane said.

"Okay, when did you get together then?" Dykstra asked.

"More specific!" Ilya exclaimed. "I am *sure* I am using that word correctly so what part of complicated do you not get?"

"Uh, okay. When did you kiss for the first time?" Dykstra rephrased, visibly feeling weird about such a juvenile metric.

Ilya grinned ready to tease. "The same time we fucked the first time."

"*Ilya,*" Shane admonished.

"Which was?" JJ prompted.

"Summer of 2010," Ilya answered.

The solid date settled differently in the plane, Shane smiled softly, JJ sat back down, and others ranged from confusion to disbelief.

"That is 11 years," Luca said from the back.

"Yes. That is how math works, Haas," Ilya teased.

"You've been together that whole time?" Wyatt asked.

"No, off and on. When we could see each other." Shane shrugged. "Took a minute."

"Oh! I have one!" Harris declared, sitting up on his knees to stare Ilya down. "When did you realize you were in love?"

"Oh uh," Shane thought for a moment. "Tuna melt."

Ilya grinned. "Really? Took you that long?"

"*Yes,*" Shane muttered, blushing.

"And then you panicked and decided to try dating a girl," Ilya surmised.

"Fuck off, Rozanov," Shane grumped, cheeks blazing making those freckles all the more prominent.

"Saskatchewan," Ilya stated, looking at Shane as the single word settled in his mind. He watched it process and watched Shane's eyes shoot back to his, softer than they grumpy way he'd been glaring at the chair in front of him only a moment earlier. And that adorable, lovesick smile was back. *"Though I did not allow myself to dwell on it,"* Ilya added in slow Russian, for Shane's ears only.

"The whole time?" Shane replied in carefully picked Russian words.

"*Da*," Ilya answered, squeezing Shane's hand.

"How did we ever think they hated each other?" Ilya heard someone mutter.

"We are very good at hiding," Ilya answered. "We have a lot of practice."

"So wait, if you guys fucked in 2010 but weren't fully together then when *did* you get together?" JJ asked.

Shane shifted uncomfortably in his seat and Ilya raised his voice again. "Okay this is lots of personal questions. You can have all of twenty, like the game. Minus the ones you've already asked you have fifteen left. I will count."

"You share the 20 questions with the Cens, JJ," Shane added. "Till the end of the season."

JJ tried to argue in quick French but Shane just shook his head.

"I have a good one!" Harris exclaimed, sitting up on his knees to turn and look back at Ilya and Shane. Ilya held up his pinkie finger. "Did you move to Ottawa for Shane?"

"Yes," Ilya and Shane answered at the same time.

Harris' face twisted up into the same expression Ilya saw on Harris' face when he watched Troy interacting with Chiron. He, smartly, sat down quickly.

"Wait, why not sign with Montreal?" Wyatt asked.

"Don't count that one," Shane said to Ilya before looking at Wyatt. "Because we don't have the cap space for him."

"It's also not the *most* accepting team," JJ added. "Most of the guys just... Ignore that Shane is gay. So long as they can ignore it they don't get bothered by it, when they're reminded they get weirded out."

Ilya huffed angrily. Shane deserved so much better than a team who ignored his sexuality, ignored that he *trusted* them.

"That's bullshit," Dykstra declared, and Ilya's heart lifted at the chorus of agreement from his teammates *and* Wiebe.

Shane shrugged, looking down at Ilya's hand wrapped in his own. "At least it's not fucking Toronto."

As had become a seemingly constant occurrence, Troy surprised Ilya when he opened his mouth. "At least Toronto's more outright with their bigotry, pretending to be okay with it just to ignore it is a more sinister form of it."

"What is that word?" Ilya asked quickly, before Troy's words could sink in. "Sinister?"

"Oh uh, bad? But like, secretly," Shane was quick to offer a translation, focused on helping Ilya understand.

JJ was giving Ilya a look, as if trying to guess if he'd done that on purpose. He wasn't going to tell JJ that he had, though. It was easy to play the dumb hockey player, even to Shane, when it would help.

"Can we ask unrelated questions in the 20 questions?" LaPointe asked.

"Ask questions, I will decide if they count." Ilya held up the solitary pinkie. "You have asked one."

"What the fuck is up with the loon, man?" LaPointe asked immediately.

Ilya grinned wide and held up his ring finger, marking a second question. There were shouts and arguments throughout the plane, and Shane grinned quietly at Ilya's side, content to wait for the team to quiet down.

"The bear is for Russia, his home of birth," Shane answered.

"The loon is for Shane," Ilya clarified. "The home I chose."

"Next you're gonna tell me the random shit you post is for Shane too!" Harris exclaimed, already a little teary-eyed if his tone was anything to go by.

"I do not hear a question, Drover," Shane sing-songed, grinning.

"You're having fun torturing them," Ilya murmured.

"*Maybe.*"

"Is the random instagram shit for Shane too?" Harris asked, suddenly popping up from his seat like a meerkat, eyes wide and hopeful.

Ilya extended his middle finger alongside the other two. "Yes. 95% at least. And no I will not stop."

Watching the war on Harris' face between the social media manager who wanted cohesion or at least understandable content and the kid who grew from a hockey loving kid into a hopeless romantic was intensely amusing to Ilya.

"Is that ring for Shane too?" Wyatt asked.

Shane turned bright red and Ilya shook his head fondly. "Is there anything you do not notice Hazy?"

"I mean apparently!" Wyatt beamed and gestured to their joined hands.

Ilya held up his index finger marking four questions. "It is." He looked over at Shane, eyes tracing the familiar pattern of his freckled cheeks down to his lips then back up to his big gorgeous brown eyes. "Shane asked me to marry him last night after the game."

There was all of one second of silence before the plane erupted into deafeningly loud noise again.

"Well, that was one way to drop that bomb," Shane muttered, cheeks burning impossibly brighter.

"You still have to tell Hayden," Ilya mused, suddenly struck with the need to hold Shane and the realization he *could.* So he released Shane's hand and wrapped his left arm around Shane's shoulders, taking the hand again a second later in his right and lifting it to his lips to kiss his knuckles. "If I tell him he will think it is shit talking."

"I don't understand your friendship with him," JJ stated. "I mean, I get it a little *now* cause obviously it started 'cause of this," he pointed between Shane and Ilya, "but you give Hayden so much shit on the ice how does he stand you?"

"He doesn't," Shane deadpanned.

"Because Jackie is my very good friend and I am the mini-Pikes' favourite uncle," Ilya declared.

"He is," Shane agreed.

"I think Ilya's just kids favourite in general," Wyatt added. "Hospital visits, camp kids, they all love him."

"If I had not seen him at Camp with my own eyes I would not believe it." JJ shook his head. "You are an asshole, Rozanov."

"I am an asshole who is *great* with kids," Ilya corrected. "Shane can confirm!"

"They're not mutually exclusive, Barrett exists," Shane chirped. "Hey Barrett, you're getting volun-told for Camp this year, by the way."

"What?" Troy looked genuinely lost.

"The Game Changers Hockey Camp," Ilya supplied. "You are joining. You have no life besides hockey, and Price said you could come because you were nice when you asked for Shane's phone number."

"Oh *that's* how he got it, I was so confused."

"Is in my paperwork, they would have found it eventually." Ilya shrugged dismissively. "I have my paperwork in order."

"Wait, Shane's in your files?" Harris asked.

Ilya released Shane's hand to wiggle five fingers in the air. "Yes he is my POA. Yuna is my emergency contact, though."

"But you're keeping this a secret." Harris gestured to the two of them.

"Who else would it be, Harris?" Ilya waited a beat before continuing. "I do not talk to my brother, have not been back to Russia in several years, and Shane is publicly my best friend, his mother is president of the foundation that bears my mother's name. Is not so strange."

"So what's the plan?" Troy asked before pointing insistently at Ilya. "Don't count this as a question, we should know so we can keep to it."

"Keep to it?" Ilya asked.

"Protect it," Wyatt rephrased.

"Protect you both," Bood's words hit Ilya like a sack of bricks.

The murmured agreement on the plane was unanimous and that... That *did* something to Ilya's brain, the part that was always dark void, that the void expanded from and retreated to when it was temporarily beaten back. Like the team had placed one of Shane's battery powered fake candles in that void.

"This is the plan," Shane said simply. "Or, well. The plan was to just keep playing, retire, and then fuck off into obscurity. For us- for *Ilya* it's the safest option."

"And the saddest," Haas' words were blunt but true.

"I am not citizen," Ilya spoke slowly, if he spoke any faster he wasn't sure he would be able to hold back the whirlwind of emotions in his mind. "Even if Shane married me tomorrow I would have to apply for permanent residency, then after a few years citizenship. If I tried to claim asylum then the reason would be open knowledge and as Barrett proved anyone with half a brain will put two and two together."

"Asylum?" Young frowned. "Isn't that for people who'd be like, killed or something if they stayed in their country?"

"If I were to be even slightly public in my sexuality, let alone go public with my relationship with Shane, I would get at minimum 16 years in prison and a fine." Ilya closed his eyes,

remembering the laws that still seemed so new, that had strengthened and been imposed when he'd been safe in America, when he'd still been fucking Shane in hotel rooms. "6 years and a fine for *participation*, 10 years for promoting homosexuality. Likely more. Because I am Russian hero, came from a family of working class *upstanding* police and now the West knows my name." He breathed slowly. "There are 98 asylum cases that have been accepted by Canada for Russians fleeing. Many are queer men. I would... Guess that most are."

He opened his eyes and tried to diffuse the tense atmosphere that had fallen over the plane. "That is if they don't just have me assassinated for embarrassing them."

"Don't joke about that," Shane breathed and Ilya pressed a quickly whispered sincere apology into his hair.

"Would they?" Holmber asked.

"They have before," Haas answered, voice heavy and sad.

"I have met and been photographed with many members of the government," Ilya explained. "It would be embarrassment for each of them."

"So we get you citizenship," Wiebe decided. "You signed a contract with Ottawa for eight years, you've stated you're planning to stay after that. You've played here for two full seasons, this is your third. The team sponsoring your application wouldn't be unheard of."

"Is a lot of paperwork."

Wiebe waved his hand dismissively. "The team already has immigration lawyers on retainer, they'll be glad to have something to do."

Ilya opened his mouth to object but remained silent when Shane cleared his throat and shot Ilya a look out of the corner of his eye. *Just leave it,* he said without words.

Ilya's eyes narrowed a little. He didn't *want* the team to waste resources on something he could hire a lawyer for himself, it didn't really matter-

Shane turned to look at him, he tilted his chin down the smallest amount and looked at Ilya in the sliver of space between the frames of his glasses and his slightly furrowed brows, begging and chastising all at once.

Ilya sighed, and rolled his eyes, ceding defeat as Shane thanked Wiebe in the tone he used whenever he reached through Ilya's general snark and bore the meaning of it to the people around them.

"Jesus fucking Christ is he capable of *not* being an asshole?" Young's question was clearly directed towards Shane but Ilya ticked up his thumb anyways.

"No," Shane answered.

"*You love it,*" Ilya crooned teasingly in Russian.

"I tolerate it," Shane corrected before switching to Russian himself, "*because I love you.*" He didn't move his eyes from Ilya's when he switched back to English. "It grows on you, though."

"Like mould," Bood agreed, sagely nodding his head.

Ilya threw his hands in the air and let them fall into his lap dramatically. "No one appreciates me here, I should go back to Boston."

"Five hours," Shane stated, stealing one of the almonds from Ilya's in-flight snack baggie and popping it into his own mouth. "No more Halloween surprises, no more weekly bagels, no more Chiron time-"

"Harris said he wished Chiron was on the plane!" Ilya exclaimed. "Can you believe that?!"

"Ilya, he's a therapy dog in training. For your team. Wishing your team had their therapy dog after a traumatic experience is not an insane thing."

"But then he would have been on the plane!"

"Ilya-"

"He is so small it would have been so scary!"

"*Ilya*-"

"Reckless wish, I have never heard such a-"

"Rozanov," Shane interrupted again. It worked, like it always *annoying* did, to pull Ilya's attention solely to Shane.

"Hollander you gotta get that man a dog," Harris said from his seat.

Shane sighed, smiling as he shook his head.

"Wait so how does this all work?" Wyatt pointed between the two of them.

"Lots of driving, hotel rooms when we are close enough on road trips to meet in the middle." Ilya shrugged and ticked up the next finger. "Overnights when we're playing home games."

"Have you ever let him win?" JJ asked Shane. Ilya ticked up his middle finger at him and counted the question anyways.

"I would rather die," Shane answered easily, so much his mother's son.

"That's a bit extreme, I mean, don't you go easy on each other?" Young spoke from the safety of his seat a few rows back so Ilya couldn't easily glare at him without untangling himself from Shane.

"Not even a little bit," Ilya dismissed. "Is fun, playing against each other. I know Shane's limits, I know what he is capable of, and he knows the same of me. We have spent thirteen years being pitted against each other in press and on ice. Even if we were not," he made a vague gesture between them, "if we did not have this history, having that constant to push us further makes us better. Going *easy* on him would be *the* biggest insult."

"We don't even go easy on each other at the cottage," Shane added.

"See that would have meaning if we knew what the fuck you were talking about," Wyatt deadpanned.

"Has polymer fake ice in the basement," Ilya supplied. "Verrrrry tiny rink. Is fun! I win most."

"Because you play dirty-"

"Because your oh so speedy speedy skating does not help you on tiny rink with nowhere to go-"

"So you admit I'm a faster skater-"

"Was basically a tie-"

"That's not what the timer said-"

"Oh my fucking god," Barrett groaned, putting his head in his hands.

End Notes

Comments and kudos on all my fics give me life but I esp love reading all the comments on my Hollanov fics bc we're all in this Loonie Bin together!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!