

ego

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ego

by [wonderlou](#)

Summary

After staying on their best behavior, Shane and Ilya reunite at the All-Star Game in Florida, but Shane has a girlfriend.

Notes

hi :-) Thanks for letting me dump my mind. I've really tried to explore a lot of things throughout this series. I know they kind of act like animals but idk I kind of enjoyed trying that out, making it more of a natural instinct sort of thing. I also like trying to be creative with sex scenes, making them saucy without being ultra explicit, but I did go a little nuts. Idk what happened with the ice cream. I hope you like it. Sorry for any errors!

Titled after the song Ego by Beyonce-- I just had to do it

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

Ilya Rozanov won the Stanley Cup that year, raising the trophy above his head, shaking it like a madman, all of his work having paid off. Hard work, dedicated work — he deserved it almost more than Shane did.

He was not upset in the slightest, though he assumed, strangely, that he would be. He was so proud that he hid his smile as his teammates moped over the Raiders' win, still groveling over their teams' brawl six months ago, the biggest grudge-holders known to man. Shane was excited, not holding any semblance of the animosity, because while Ilya Rozanov had the Cup, he had Ilya Rozanov, a nearly perfectly-even deal.

It was complicated, as it had always been. The first site to leak Shane's test results was taken down in less than thirty minutes, but that was more than enough time for it to be picked up, distributed, and stuffed to the brim with pompous, ridiculous rumors, though none that Shane wasn't prepared for. He had not slept his way into the league. He was not tantalizing alphas in order to deceive them enough to steal a win from them. His evidence was his game, and he played very heavily, and no one could deny that. Anyone who thought he was being handed anything for being an omega was quickly silenced with his statistics: goals scored, passes successfully made, time on ice. He was building his team. The Voyageurs had not won the cup, but they would be back. This was so certain that Shane did not even fret over it.

His life moved at a pace so dizzying that he could not even keep track of what day it was. He won most valuable player at the end of the season and the leadership award for being the first omega captain in the history of the league, even after his blunder, which was smoothed over with a heartfelt statement — *I sincerely apologize for and am incredibly disappointed by my behavior brought on by personal stressors* — and two donations made to mental health facilities.

He joined radio shows and shot for magazines and strategically avoided cutting questions in interviews about his post-hockey plans as if he had ever dreamed of stopping for anything. *While I do admire those who make that choice, that isn't an option for me right now. I have a lot to learn and do. I have a lot to show.* He ignored the strangely timid looks from some of his colleagues, tried not to notice the wide breadths they made around him at ceremonies. It was something like anger, adjacent to it, but he knew it was deeper than that. He understood it. He had felt that misplaced betrayal and discomfort in himself, so he knew that it might take time for others to come around. He met with physical therapists who wanted to study and make note of his body's changes from hockey, which he was eager to take part in, wanting to grow the sport, wanting to participate in making it accessible for all. It wasn't all bad.

Most surprisingly of all, he had a shiny girlfriend of about three months, actress and beta Rose Landry.

It was his mother's idea, corroborated by the public relations specialist she hired, which was also her own idea. It was a means of deflecting from the horrendous opinions that could be brewed from being a single omega in an alpha-dominant field. Damage control, an alibi. It was a good idea, especially when it *worked*: shitty articles about Shane sleeping around were replaced by shitty articles about his relationship with Rose. And Rose was sweet, kind, trying

to come into alignment with her own acting career, so it was mutually beneficial. Simbiotic. They got along well.

“I hope you don’t think, that, um,” Shane had blubbered when they were out on their second date. So many photographs of them had already been taken through the window that he could still see their bright flashes whenever he blinked, and was also seeing them when there were none, “I’m just trying to say that, well— I’m—I’ve got a—”

“I can tell,” Rose replied with a very pretty smile, neatly scooping a spoonful of her soup. “That’s his sweater, right?” She reached across the table and touched his arm, fingers stroking the warm black fabric. A camera fluttered; she was good at this. Of course she was good at this, her entire line of work involving being the object of a lens. Shane had smiled, happy, relieved, angling his cheesing face away from the window. He loved wearing them. He felt... alright. “Cute. It stinks.”

The post-season All-Star game was held in June in Tampa Bay, Florida, which was exciting for several reasons. It would be hot; it would be wet, pools and beaches and fun. Rose was coming with him, which wasn’t quite so thrilling but at least it was opportunistic— she was fun to go out with, and she gave Shane a bit more confidence than if he were to go alone.

The most important reason Shane could not sleep for a week before flying down south: Ilya was going to be there, playing on his team. Ilya! *Ilya*.

They hadn’t seen each other, prioritizing their focus. That necessity was clear to them after the immediate fallout from their brawl. From it had secreted sensationalized stories of their rivalry, rumors that could not be further from the truth. It sucked, *ached*, but they knew when to put their heads down, lay low, both disciplined in that way. They had both put too much work into their careers to get too crazed by each other, ignoring the natural gravity that plighted any bonded pair. To the best of their abilities, they kept leveled heads. It helped that they were both trying to take their teams to the Championship, and it helped that they were rarely in the same time zone. It helped that Shane had a fake girlfriend who understood how much he loved Ilya, even if she didn’t know who it was.

He and Ilya called each other every day at least once, either on the way to practice or after games, sleepy-soft through the phone before bed. Occasionally they mailed things to each other, fake names etched above the addresses. Ilya sent clothes, jackets and sweaters he had hanging in his closet, tees for lounging and nesting. Shane sent small packages: receipts from restaurants he visited with his teammates, snacks he picked up from international airports, hotel cards, magnetic souvenirs, books he read. There was little rhyme or reason behind these trinkets, but it felt right. Shane thought about Ilya with every step he took, so to him, it made perfect sense to send them along, to combine them.

When awarded a little bit of privacy, they FaceTimed, blurry faces connecting after momentary lapses of service. They spent their cycles this way, desperate and writhing and plugging their dying phones up in a haze. When in between locations, they called. When they were too busy to spare a full conversation, Ilya developed a habit of texting him the letter *o*. Just one letter, though sometimes, with extra time, it came with some accompaniments.

WED 6:15 AM

LILY: good morning o

THURS 7:02 AM

LILY: miss you o

THURS 1:22 PM

LILY: o

THURS 1:35 PM

JANE: o?

THURS 2:00 PM

LILY: means I am thinking about you

Shane caught on pretty quickly. One day, with a heat in his stomach, a match sparking, sparking, he texted back slowly:

THURS 2:01 PM

JANE: a

It was solidified, settled. Almost perfect.

FRIDAY 8:19 PM

JANE: calling you in 30 min a

SAT 6:59 PM

JANE: good luck today a watch #9 he will probably be on you

SAT 7:01 AM

LILY: I wish it would be you on me o 🙄

SAT 12:11 AM

LILY: oooooooooooooooooo need to see you

SUN 9:33 AM

JANE: I love you a

It became their exchange when their minds were occupied with each other, two little letters that meant the world to them, small and encompassing and easy to send with haste. They were subtle enough to avoid suspicion when a nosy eye glanced over their shoulders. It was just for them, *alpha, omega*.

It was agonizing to wait out the time before they saw each other again, but their routine was private and unique to them, well-oiled and fine-tuned. They took pride in it. Maybe there was even something beneficial to it, because Ilya won the Cup. Shane tried not to think too hard about it.

It was hot stepping off the plane, but it felt even hotter when their van released them in front of the resort they were staying at. It was essentially a free trip, turned down by most of his teammates with children and families and more relaxing intentions for the off-season, but Shane was in no position to decline. There were a few other players from other Canadian and American teams who made their way inside with him. The casual conversation was pleasant, bearing perhaps a slight strain, some alphas not knowing quite how to act with an omega colleague. At least they couldn't smell him well, for Shane was still religiously taking his suppressants. He didn't mind the awkwardness, focusing instead on the effort made.

Ilya's scent, however, was not subdued in the slightest, and Shane could feel him when he dropped his bags off at the hotel, toasted marshmallow wedged in the fibers of the carpet he stepped on. It wasn't very long before he was buzzing, pleasantly light in the head, *drugged*, one-track-minded. It was a little like how he was with hockey, but more intense, moving him without control. When in the game, he felt like he manned the whole ice.

The stark difference used to scare him, like driving with no control of the wheel, but now he was used to it, and liked it, because he knew what it meant. He was taking his time just to sink fully into the delightful feeling. He fixed his flight hair in the mirror and changed into a new shirt that wasn't touched by the stale and scent-mixed airplane environment. He texted Rose, who was flying in a little later, to tell her that he would see her tonight. She responded immediately.

FRI 3:55 PM

ROSE: Dress nice pap pics!!!

Shane pocketed his phone and left his hotel room, following the weighted lull of his body. Closer. Closer. He bumped into a man, distracted, apologizing with a smile and a handshake. He couldn't remember anything he actually said. His feet took him right to the terrace, yellow Florida sun beating down on a large, glittering blue pool. It was already in use by about forty

guests ranging in ages, from children playing games in the water to older adults sunbathing, supervising.

Shane hardly saw them, anyway. Sitting in a tall, silver stool at the bar was Ilya, golden in a ridiculous red Hawaiian shirt. The terrace only got hotter; Shane's stomach was tossing up a storm. Marshmallow-hot, melting all around his fingers, brown sugar in flames. He missed him. He needed him. His feet carried him over and he hoped he didn't fall into the pool.

He stood at the seat beside him and resisted reaching out to touch him. It was easy enough to do on the ice, if Shane just kept his eyes low and concentrated. But Ilya wasn't wearing anything underneath his unbuttoned shirt and Shane could not concentrate on much at all. "Congrats on your win," he greeted casually, proud and shining with it. He wanted to be closer but knew better than to try. People would be watching them more closely than ever, as they were now playing on the same team after a tumultuous season. Fans had looked for another conflict to break out each time they'd played against each other, but they had been perfectly amicable, plugging their noses up, sharing nothing but a fleeting wink once throughout the entire match. The spotlight was no longer directly on them here in the summer, but Shane worried about how much they glowed when together, especially when they were particularly good at *hotels*.

"Thank you." Ilya's voice sounded much better *off* of a phone call, a little rougher, nudging him a little harder, but maybe Shane was just horrendously hopeless. He must be, because Ilya's smile made him nervous, as though they were not in an established courtship, as though they were not in love. The alpha's eyes addressed him gently, warmly: one look up, then down, taking him in. He had a loose hand around a bottle of beer and he raised it to his mouth. Shane stared at his lips, his throat, and then blinked and looked away. "Congrats on your loss," Ilya teased once he swallowed.

Shane snorted, looking down at the smooth bar top. Could anyone tell he was this way? "Asshole. It will never happen again."

"You seem to have managed," Ilya hummed, cordial words nestled behind a gaze that was heating Shane up, and he was starting to squirm, so he pulled back a bar stool and sat down next to him. Ilya caught the attention of the bartender, lifted his bottle, and then nodded his head toward Shane, calling for another. His eyes lingered, slow, and snagged onto his own gaze, knowing and soft. Shane could see the deep breath he took; he could feel it, the air shimmering. "Most Valuable Player." And, fonder yet, "Omega of all time."

If anyone else were to say that, Shane would probably get annoyed, but now he was annoyed at how his entire body simmered over, like sand washing over him, tingling, tickling. He felt himself flush—the Florida humidity made it stifling, like he was choking in his own body. "That's not an actual award," he uttered in a weak, sheepish counter.

"No?" Ilya clicked his tongue disappointedly against his teeth, then sighed. "You look pretty," he complimented. "Happy. Warm."

Shane was reaching his breaking point, and he was progressively anxious of any watching eyes. His brain was scrambling in real-time, vision distorting right at the corners, going

smooth and gray. “Stop, Ilya,” he warned, but he was smiling, smitten. Happy, yes. Hot as hell, certainly. Ilya was likely scenting him, even inadvertently— that had to be it.

Ilya backed off with a grin hidden behind the head of his beer. The bartender dropped off Shane’s bottle, but, Christ, Shane did not think he could pick it up without dropping it due to his shakiness. He could at least hold it, its condensation cooling him, water sliding over fingertips and pooling under the glass. “Plans tonight?” the alpha asked.

A child squealed behind them, the piercing sound followed by a rush of water. “I’m going out with Rose,” Shane replied. He had talked about this thoroughly with Ilya, from the moment that his mother suggested it. Together they had weighed the pros and cons, ultimately agreeing that she could probably help manipulate the attention in their favor. What could a few photographed outings hurt? The alpha was always quiet about it, dissatisfied in that brooding way of his, jaw all tense and tight, but Shane was pretty skilled at keeping him aware and convinced of the reality, putting it down nice and soft for him and him only, which he planned to do tonight. Regardless, Ilya emitted one small grunt. Shane again bit back the urge to touch him. “But then I’ll just be back here,” he attempted to soothe, words drawn out. “What about you?”

Ilya shrugged and shifted in his seat. He sighed as though considering dinner options in his head, easy and light. “Not sure. I might find omega to steal away.” He finished his drink. “Or — I might stay back. Wait around and see if one comes for me.”

Shane was losing his grip; he was having a hard time remembering that they were in public. Everything was fading away too quickly, the two of them together, spiraling down inside this universe they had created for themselves. Ilya was only teasing— this did not stoke a worry in Shane, only a deep longing. “You mean comes *to* you,” he corrected, feeling mushy, stupid, and affected.

“I know what I meant, omega,” Ilya responded seriously, but his lips were twitching with a smile. His foot tapped Shane’s twice discretely, yet Shane shuddered like he’d just been kissed on the mouth. “Have fun tonight.”

Shane finally found the ability to lift his hand and take a drink of his beer. He would need it, to get through this. It was instantly hot on his tongue, foamy, not relieving in the slightest, but at least he could more than just gawk. “I’ll text you,” he promised. He looked at Ilya like he loved him, and Ilya looked at him like he loved him back, *more*, and nothing else was said. The sun beat down, and the water rushed.

That night he let Rose tug him around a club that was only a walk away from their oceanfront hotel. She was shiny on his arm. The energy felt different— or maybe Shane was just drinking more than he ever normally would, or maybe he was feeling the music a little deeper within him, or maybe he was just itching to get back to Ilya. It was fun to dance with Rose, but he would much rather be dancing with *him*, feeling *his* hands up his shirt, on his hips, over his ribcage. The alcohol, at least, made it easy to pretend, and when he closed his eyes, it was even closer to perfect.

He felt unnerved about his every move being watched. There were no cameras directly pointed at his face like in interviews, or overtly placed right outside restaurants like whenever

he went out to eat with Rose, but it was worse knowing that they could be anywhere here, subtle, recording, grabbing every piece of the reality he existed in. There wasn't necessarily any need to pretend, even though that was all he was doing. He was pretending to enjoy brushing his nose right beneath Rose's ear, pretending to know the lyrics to the songs, pretending to dance, his body mostly just bouncing up and down, head throbbing, pulsing out *Ilya, Ilya, Ilya*.

It was so busy inside his head. He was moving through it all well enough, but his vision spun sometimes, and when he was alone, it all came crashing onto him, smothering him. He'd had quite a few bad days, rehearsing the questions that were going to be asked of him the next morning, going over different intonations, different quirks of his eyebrows or bouts of laughter. He replayed segments and his responses in his mind, and when videos and articles were published online, he rewound them back again and again until he had the entire interview memorized, knowing what he had done right versus wrong. Luckily he was too busy or exhausted or both to read comments on a regular basis, but he knew they were there, growing in number, tens, dozens, hundreds, *watching him*.

He took shots, danced, took a couple more, let Rose kiss his cheek and wind her arms around his shoulders, her loose hair tossing graceful curls around the dimly lit space. He had not heavily drank like this in a couple of years, but, shit, why not? The season was over. It had been more difficult than he'd expected, but so much of what his life now was had been unexpected. It made sense to try to let loose a little, just a taste. He had been with Ilya for almost a full year. He had joined the few out omegas in the league. They were following him on Instagram, giving him their numbers, sharing their stories with him. He didn't mind being here, for now. He cautiously enjoyed it, holding it gratefully close to him.

"Slide your hands up my back," Rose coached in his ear, words wrapped around a smile. She pressed in closer, and Shane opened space for her to, keeping his face close to hers. It felt like...nothing. *Nothing* in a chilly, hollow way. A little abnormal, but he told his body to move, and it did, connected and simple. He moved his palms up her spine, and her arms tightened around his neck. "Perfect. Oh my god, someone smells like B.O."

Shane laughed, and they danced away.

Occasionally people came up to him, asking for a photo, even asking for a signature, which Shane dazedly agreed to, slippery fingers fumbling around a dried Sharpie. Over the course of the evening he felt a hand or two brushing along his lower back or right above his hip, innocent enough if not suggestive in greeting, smiles coated in deep alpha scents, sea salt and wood, lingering. They asked what he was drinking, why he was in Florida, and Shane was so stunned and clueless that he hardly knew how to respond, crowding closer to Rose, for she muted everything, neutralized it, steered the alphas away with a cute little sulk, *don't you see he's busy?*

"I want to go home," he complained an hour later, drunk enough for his vision to skip. Everything was funny, a little crazy, *good*. It was quite the treat. He was getting tired, though, and kept tripping over things, a flush high at the tips of his ears. He kept Rose close with his chin hooked over her shoulder, arms limp around her sides. She was rubbing his back, now, giggling, halfway in conversation with a woman she had met, probably, about seven minutes

ago. Rose didn't have a scent, but she smelled good, anyway, perfume on her collarbones. In fact, whenever Shane so much as thought of her name, his mind fastened onto Ilya— ash, rose, toasted with sugar— it was nice how that worked out.

“We're in Florida, silly,” she teased, and when Shane lifted his heavy body to pout at her, she moved a sweaty lock from her face and then did the same with Shane. She cupped his face in her hands and cooed. “You look like a lost puppy.”

He *felt* lost. It didn't feel good. Rose didn't understand. He wasn't sure if anyone ever could. He couldn't even say it, his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. Something was pulling in his stomach. It was as vigorous as nausea, but much sweeter, a craving in his spirit. “No, I want—” Lights were flashing, but when he blinked, they were on his eyelids, too. It was so hot. He'd been overheated since the plane landed, the warmth right below his skin, warmest right in the middle of him. It was starting to make him sick. He needed— Ilya. His heart wouldn't stop beating heavy and hard and on fire like this, he knew. Only Ilya could put it out. “I want to go back to the hotel,” he drawled. That was it. His body sang, happy with him for coming to this drunken realization.

It felt like his mind toggled, *standby*, and on he went, closing out, peeling away, the night ticking toward morning with every move he made.

—

Ilya never just *stayed* in hotels. He actually used to hate each moment he was alone in the room, stepping out the very second he got the chance, eager to kill the noise in his mind, drink it away, fuck it away, music loud and controlling his body. He wondered what the hell he was doing when he lounged around all night, but it was just what he *did*. He couldn't stop. He was...waiting. Patient.

He supposed all he did was wait. He had waited for his career, had worked hard and quietly. He had waited for the Cup, and he had won it. He waited for his brother to call him, waited for when he would have to return to Russia, waited for the day his father died. It crawled right at his heels, distracting him, keeping him on edge. But still, he stayed in tonight, and that was strange to him. Uncomfortable in that new sort of way, but also certain. Solid. It felt natural, and his mind was sort of light.

He had been waiting, *waiting*, for the All-Stars game. For Florida. For Shane. He didn't really want to be doing anything else, except maybe be down at the club with him, wrapped around him, hands mapping him. He wanted that so badly. He didn't want anyone else touching him. He wanted to *be there* to *ensure* that no one was touching him, or even looking his way. He did not want to be forced to see that Rose had privileges that he did not.

Right. He was so jealous that he could hardly eat. He knew that about himself and was honest about it. Hockey as a whole had left him triumphantly exhausted, and moody, even as the weather brightened and promised relief, and his jealousy was why it lingered. It fucking made everything worse, agonizing. He was *patient*, so it killed him in the process, giving him nightmares of waking up to find his whole life exposed, torn away from him. He would wake up in a sweat, thinking of his father's grave beside his mother's, where Ilya didn't want it to be. It was empty aside from a few thousand flyers: printed articles and pictures of his and

Shane's text messages, screenshots from their FaceTime calls. Ilya hid this volcano of feelings well to his own detriment, and he supposed that was why he was waiting, *waiting*, now, pacing around his hotel room.

All this waiting gave him plenty of time to scroll through his phone through the whirlpool of digitized information, eyes burning with the wrong kind of light. One link turned into twelve different open tabs. He tried to dispute the thoughts that swept cleanly across his skull with what he had in front of him, or almost. It was like war.

SHANE HOLLANDER NEW GIRL

Shane had been practically radiating heat, earlier today, by the coolness of the resort pool. Smiling and fit, bright citrus had lit Ilya's senses. He looked great, which always made Ilya a little extra protective, jealous that he was not there to help foster it. It was novel, unexplored, to feel so possessive and responsible. He was waiting to see what came of it, eager to prove that he could maintain it.

"She's a great girl," Shane Hollander confessed to SI, ducking his head sheepishly, "I guess being open about things helped pave way for a new connection."

Ilya loved him. He loved him so much his teeth hurt, nerves twisted beyond repair, and he was now doing things he didn't understand, staying in hotels and checking his phone—he even walked to the corner store, hands in his pockets, picking up a few things, watching the sun settle behind the ocean. He studied its golden clay hues, bright as Shane, clouds stretched over the landscape. It looked just like him. Ilya did not know what else to do than that, *wait*, *wait*, for *his* omega, and watch him in the sunset.

Omega Shane Hollander's and Alpha Ilya Rozanov's Brawl Reignites Debate on CoEd Contact Sports

Healthy and taken care of. That was how Shane looked. It was so ridiculous that this appeared to be because of *Rose Landry*, the ordinary, boring Canadian woman, but Shane liked her, and they got along well. Ilya knew otherwise—in every picture Ilya had ever seen of the two of them together, Shane was wearing something of his: usually some sort of shirt, a tie on the pair's first formal date—Shane belonged to him, the omega made it clear. Still, it made Ilya feel sort of—nasty, clinging in a way that did not come firstly to him, but here it was now, all in his fingertips, making his hopping feet restless.

"They Can Tell!" GIF Breakdown of Omega Shane Hollander's Rage Against Alpha Ilya Rozanov

"GIF...", Ilya tried, eyebrows knitted together, frustration cloaking his patience, biting at it. He thumbed at the link repeatedly when it took forever to load, the connection skipping in this stupid hotel. What the hell was a GIF?

His phone rang loudly, cutting through the booming red in his vision. Ilya answered it in an instant. Just like that, *clean* and *sweet* washed over him, and he felt renewed, like morning..

“Alpha,” Shane whispered, beating Ilya to a greeting. The two syllables echoed loudly in the phone, rattling Ilya right through. He sort of sang it, all low and slow, dampened with the giggling touch of alcohol. “I’m in the hotel.” Yes, the alpha could feel the atmosphere changing, could feel his patience paying off just like it had with the Cup. “Where’s your room, again?”

Ilya’s heart started to pound. “I texted it to you,” he murmured, looking around for a shirt to throw on. “Five-five-four.”

“Can’t read it.” Shane laughed again, bubbling, his body very close to letting it completely free, overflowing. Behind his labored breaths, like he was in a hurry, Ilya heard the sporadic tapping of a button. “Need you,” he whispered, *hissed*, like Ilya was in him already, spreading him.

“You have me.” Always, as promising as the sun. Ilya pulled on his shirt, heart rate climbing up his throat. “Do you need help?”

“Nope.” There was a tinny *ding*, and Shane’s voice got even quieter, sultry, hot like a warming oven, stepping into the enclosed elevator. “Want to know what I’m thinking about?”

“Of course,” Ilya smiled, goosebumps on his skin.

“I want you to mark me all over,” Shane sighed, and his words began to sever harshly, interrupted by all the metal around him. Ilya clung to them, gripping the phone. He closed his eyes and he could fucking see it, Shane red and purple, trembling beneath him. “I want to feel it. I want— see it— when I—” The line disconnected as Shane disappeared up the elevator shaft, but Ilya was ready, tossing his phone on the bed, fucking *nervous*, excited, eager to redirect the energy stored in his body.

He stood at the door and...*waited*, grinning. This, here, was what he was thinking about when he won the Cup. Not meeting Shane in a hotel, of course, but *being with him*, waiting so patiently to get out of the world so he could get into his own, so he could wrap his hands around it. He stared at the handle, imagining Shane tipsily making his way down the hall—he should make sure he didn’t need any help, because it could get kind of confusing, halls sometimes divided by odds and evens, sometimes in descending order. And Shane was drunk.

He opened the door decisively, and Shane stumbled right into his chest, exactly how it was supposed to be, all bright and cold and refreshing. He smelled muddled, like he had been bathed in other scents, which spiked Ilya’s jealousy, causing him to grip him tight. However, just like when Shane first arrived at the resort, the scent Ilya knew best tore through all others, as demanding as it had ever been, pulling the alpha straight out of his mind. He still didn’t understand how Shane stuck to him so badly. The only thing he knew to do was follow it. Get to it.

“Oh, boy, oh, boy,” Ilya whistled, getting them in quickly, grasping Shane by the sides of his head and kissing him. He tasted like tart lemons and sugar, and the omega nipped his lip, starting trouble. “Did you have fun?” Ilya was not the controlling type, even when the urge tickled at the lining of his stomach. He wanted Shane to have a good time. Whenever he went

out, back when he used to, back when he wasn't waiting around for this omega to return to him, *he* enjoyed being among the intoxicated masses. Besides, he liked when Shane came back just for him, all heavy like this, their chests glued to each other, like they were finally how and where they were meant to be. Ilya knew that he would—he always did. Natural. Easy. Ilya would never go out again if it meant this could happen forever.

“Mm-hm,” Shane hummed, flushed three different shades of pink in his cheeks and ears. His shirt collar was damp with sweat. He was smiling, beaming, glitter in his eyes, orange shavings, too.

“Yes?” Ilya pressed, his heart bursting. He sat a staggering Shane on the edge of the bed and bent down to unlace his shoes.

“*Yes*,” Shane repeated clearly, the good boy he was. He pressed his palms into his eye sockets and scrubbed, then leaned back on his hands, head drunkenly cocked. His gaze was...it had dissolved like sugar in water. “Only because I knew I was coming here.”

“Is that right?” Off with one shoe, then the other. Ilya remembered where they were over a year ago, somewhere just like this, except Shane squirming on the bed, falling into heat, saying his name for the very first time. Ilya was never the same from that moment on. “We have to play tomorrow, remember?”

“We have *practice* tomorrow,” Shane corrected with a matter-of-fact lilt to his words.

“Yes, and then game in evening,” Ilya laughed. He kissed the bone of Shane's left ankle, pressing his gentle thumb into the arch of his foot. “Do your feet hurt?”

“Bah.” Shane waved a hand. “No. I'll be good.”

“Yes, you will.” Ilya rose to his feet and started for the mini fridge. “I got you something.” Wedged up at the top was a box of ice cream, and he pulled it free, displayed it like the Cup had been displayed for him to take—roaring in his ears, he had done it for his *mother*, for his future, a future that was coming to him clearly for the very first time in his life. At least, it was a future he could see himself *loving* in, thriving in. It was something he had been waiting for his entire life. *Patient*.

Squinting, frazzled, Ilya read the label casually like he hadn't spent entire minutes searching for it at the store. “It is like Snickers candy, but with ice cream inside. You like?”

Shane leapt from the bed and into Ilya, again, arms wrapped around him, so hot to the touch. “I love you so much,” he slurred, everything about him slow and sleepy. “Thank you *so much*.”

Ilya felt a warm surge of pride unlike anything he'd ever felt before. It took his breath away, momentarily freezing his thoughts, so that all he could feel was a sense of ease of knowing he had provided. When he attempted a deep breath, his nose was stuffed up, oranges and cream, *melting*. *Waiting*. “You're welcome,” was all he could really say, clearing his throat, pursing his smiling lips to keep from mocking him *so much*. “I will get some water.”

Shane shimmied a small dance while tearing open the ice cream box, happy, happy, pulling out a bar. He ripped the white plastic and took a moaning bite. “A bunch of people came up to me tonight,” he noted through a full mouth. “Fuck, this is so good.”

Ilya calmly opened the fridge and grabbed a water bottle. Hearing this didn’t anger him. It didn’t even surprise him—Shane was sweeter and more alluring than usual tonight, steam practically coming off of him, tendrils of bright yellow lemon. Instead, something loud popped open right inside Ilya’s chest, a small rocket. His mind staccatoed just like Shane’s voice had in the elevator. He opened the bottle and took a sip from it, leaning against the wall, crossing one ankle before the other. “Who spoke to you?”

Shane took another bite of his ice cream, unzipping his jeans, shaking them off. He had the fucking sense to fold them carefully over his arm, albeit rather unsuccessfully with all he had going on, all the eating and the swaying. Ilya watched him, his stare bouncing between his jeans and his thighs and his mouth and his hands and the line of his boxers as they were ridden up toward his hip. “A couple of hockey fans, I don’t know. Tourists. I think a player from, well, here. America.”

“Florida?” This seemed pertinent, determinant, the hair on the back of Ilya’s neck rising, though his face remained stale.

“No. Uh— I don’t know. Minnesota, maybe. Some *M*. Maybe Michigan.” He finished the ice cream, jamming the discarded wrapper back into the box, which stayed tucked comfortably under his armpit. Ilya took another deep breath as Shane pulled out a second: satisfied, pleased that he was indulging. Citrus zipped up and into the alpha’s sinuses, weakening his hearing, his sight. “They were nice, I think.” Shane fidgeted with the wrapper, nervous little thing, making the room hot, making Ilya sluggish.

“You think.” He rose from the wall and stepped closer to Shane, taking the ice cream from him, unwrapping it for him. The cellophane crinkled as he folded it neatly down the treat. Heat rushed in his head, and he worried the ice cream would break in his fingers. “Why are you telling me this, omega?”

Shane’s hazy eyes didn’t leave his own. He was good at that, now, holding Ilya’s attention, keeping what was given to him. Usually Ilya had to haul his heavy head up, but now the omega was determined, a little shy like he got when they were alone. “I don’t want them to come up to me.”

Ilya raised an eyebrow. “Isn’t that what your fake girlfriend is supposed to be for?” Was this boring actress bad at her job? She had to be, holding his hand in pictures, walking behind him, smiling for the camera. *Shane belonged to Ilya*— of course she could not compare, could not keep him happy and fucked and content and protected as well as Ilya could.

Shane blinked his dark lashes against the freckles under his eyes, sugar-sweet falling off of him. “Rose is just... a diversion. I want *you* to make sure they don’t come up to me.” Considering this, Ilya held the ice cream to Shane’s lips, offering it with a little bob. Shane bit into it, the hard chocolate shell crunching between his lips, dissolving under his working tongue. He didn’t use his teeth. “Please?” Shane whispered so nicely, the cherry on top, licking his lips, white in his mouth like after he opened it pretty and wide so that Ilya could—

“Finish your dessert,” Ilya murmured, handing over the ice cream, so overwhelmed that he couldn’t see, couldn’t fucking think. “Then take off your clothes. Don’t rush,” he added quickly when Shane took a large bite of the ice cream, antsy now. “Have a seat. Tell me where you want me to make you mine.”

Shane stumbled backwards until his bottom hit the mattress. The air was rippling around them, thick as ever, enough for one to run a finger through it. The space between them was helpful, sort of, but it wasn’t like Ilya could breathe any easier, waiting, *waiting*. It was a quickly closing chasm. “Um...my neck. My throat.” Shane took a deep breath, his pupils blown wide. He licked the melting ice cream that dripped down the side of the snack, humming again, tipsy man, eyes on him. “My chest.”

Ilya made an encouraging sound, *go on*.

Shane put the remainder of the ice cream bar into his mouth, wrapper falling away, as he tucked his arms into his shirt to take it off. There were patches of sweat under the armpits of the fabric. “I want to feel— you know.” He was breathing heavily as he tossed his shirt to the floor, worked up, needing to be brought down. He was hard. He was *wet*. Ilya could smell it. “I want to feel it. I want to feel it when I sit and walk, and I want everyone to know.”

Ilya’s entire skull ached, all tensed up with what was being insinuated. “I have to go a little bit gentle,” he reasoned kindly, teasing, as if he didn’t slut Shane out whenever he could, making him shout and drop off the face of the earth. “You’re a sweet, precious omega. *Fragile*. And you play tomorrow.”

“I’m not fragile,” Shane scoffed, irritated but it underperformed against his desire. “I want to feel it when I play tomorrow,” he insisted. “I want to remember you even when we aren’t touching, or near each other.” He looked down at his hands, palms bright pink, hot. “I want it for when you’re not with me.”

Fuck. Ilya actually felt weak, and a little sorry for himself, and really fucking wired, a sort of buzz a cigarette could never touch, not even a pack. “They will think it is Rose Landry,” he murmured, stalling, *waiting*, as the fire built up in his chest, burning him. When the words materialized into meaning, though, it clicked into some sense. He would get to mark Shane up— not legitimately, not finally, but still, leaving hickeys all over him was something he couldn’t even think of doing before Shane had been revealed as an omega. It was the perfect opportunity to stake his claim, and his mouth watered at the idea. He would be a fool to pass it up. “They will think she did this to you.” A possessive flare rose as bile in his throat. His voice sounded strange to him. He didn’t want Rose to assume the credit for what he was about to do to Shane.

“Rose can’t do what you will do.” Shane said this like a secret he was certain of, shifting in his spot on the bed. “I’ll know it’s you. *They’ll* know.”

“Who will know?” Ilya did not think he was this dumb, at least not all the time, but he was alone in a hotel room with an omega he loved, so unfortunately he wasn’t shocked that it felt like there were gaps in his living, his mind detached from him. It sounded like the ocean was roaring in his ears.

“Other alphas.” Shane’s breath caught, and his lips turned into an uncomfortable frown. His eyes were big as saucers, glossy. It was magical how he had gone from not wanting to address being an omega to asking to be shown, claimed, in just a short year under Ilya’s care. “I feel like I’m on fire, baby, please—”

Baby. Christ. Ilya didn’t need to hear anything else. He had taken way too long, in the first place, *again*, and this was his moment.

He got to Shane quickly, shedding his sweats and shirt in the process. He settled on top of him and pressed him nice and easy into the well-made bed. He cupped his face and guided him into a dizzying kiss, slow, deliberate, tasting the cream in his mouth, the nutty-chocolate aftertaste that stuck to his gums, kissing him until he got through to that citrus that crazed him, directing every move made.

He kissed his neck, tilting his head to the side, burying his face against the tacky, salty skin. He tasted incredible, and Ilya kissed and kissed and bit and dragged his hungry teeth until Shane was trembling under him, legs parted for him, hips seeking to be pressed down, canting up, up, up. Ilya happily gave him what he wanted with deep, generous grinds of his own hips.

“Sweet thing,” Ilya praised, lips burning as he soothed them over Shane’s irritated skin, red roses blooming along his collarbones and throat when Ilya took these patches between his teeth. His quiet, timid sounds rumbled below his mouth— like he was playing an instrument. He avoided that little section under his ear, pale thin skin thrumming with his pulse, no matter how much the omega attempted to angle his head and get him there. Ilya liked to save it for later, for when Shane was crumbling apart, in need of one more little thing to get him there. “I love you. Look at me.”

He did.

Ilya kissed down Shane’s heaving chest, groaned his satisfaction when Shane’s hand slipped into his curls. He bit his nipple until the omega was tugging his head away with a painful yank. Grinning like a cat, Ilya slid down to the plush of his stomach, nipping, sucking, theatrically, but with intent. His hipbone, the top of his thigh, sliding his boxers down his legs, heat in his face, citrus in his nose.

“For me?” he gasped, kind of fucking around, but also kind of astonished, his mind dwindling to a fine pinpoint. He sucked a mark into the softest bit of his thigh, cock in his face, begging for him— he had other plans, so he lifted a hand to stroke it with a few conciliatory fingers, hot in his palm. Just a little, just enough for Shane to melt down a little bit, sighing. Ilya sucked another deep mark into his opposite thigh and then grabbed his hips to turn him over, shiny slick catching his eye.

Shane was embarrassed, but what came out of his mouth wasn’t, as he followed Ilya’s lead and turned onto his belly, thighs apart, eager, automatic. He knew, too, what Ilya wanted. He knew what Ilya had wanted his entire life. Had to, the way he was giving himself up like this. “Was always for you,” he slurred.

That felt true. Ilya was going to make it true. He kissed the crest of Shane's thigh, right below that ass of his, soaking wet, and when he leaned forward and tasted it, it was all orange in the great state of Florida. Ilya was gone, and his body did what it wanted, gathering Shane up by his hips, as close to him as possible, so he could devour him. Shane cried for him like he was willing to go.

He fucked him on his stomach with his own underwear bunched below his ass—he'd taken too long, spreading Shane open with his mouth and tongue and nosy fingers until the omega tumbled into orgasm under him, slick all over everywhere, down Ilya's chin, down his throat, down Shane's thighs. Ilya had needed him too badly, couldn't wait any fucking longer, and now he had him shaking underneath him and they were panting. The intense sound of Ilya's body entering his willing one again and again and again made the alpha's head fucking turn.

He dragged Shane to the end of the bed, pulling him still by his hips, those hips that made him so good at hockey and so good at rocking back with his strong thighs to take Ilya when the alpha told him to. Since he wanted to feel it, Ilya made him, staying still and goading him, making him work for it, congratulating him on how fucking easy and obedient he was. When told to go faster, he did, looking over his shoulder; when told to go slower, so Ilya could *see*, he *did*. Ilya slapped his ass because he *wanted to feel it*, pretty red, deep, like a flower. He smacked him eight plus one plus two plus four times, until the skin blotted, tender; until the omega was gasping like he couldn't take it anymore.

"This is fucking mine," Ilya growled, his hands stinging. He hoped Shane would feel some relief tomorrow when he sat on those cold hockey benches — Ilya wanted him to feel it then, too, squirming, unfocused, thinking back to this. "Everyone will know. Everyone will see when you get dressed—and when they look at you online, all fucked out. When your fake girlfriend waves at you from stands, *wow, look what she did*, they will say." He smacked Shane one final time, and made sure Shane *felt it*. "No," he snarled. "Alpha did this. Who did this to you?"

"You did," Shane told him, head dropped toward his chest, rattled moans falling from him. He was so far away, so pretty, trusting Ilya with every part of him, every part inside of him, not minding when Ilya was this rough with his love. He needed it. They both did.

"What is his name?" Ilya commanded, feigning confusion, having to remember to breathe. He clutched Shane's shoulder for leverage and fucked in, in, in. "Same person who just won Cup, yes? Tell me his name."

Shane groaned, a piercing keen. "Ilya Rozanov," he whined in six evenly paced syllables. "Ilya." Three more. "Ilya." Two, kind of, as he trembled, struggling to stay upright.

"Good boy," Ilya praised savagely, grunting, about to tear a hole through his own bitten lip. He grabbed Shane like he was getting away from him, crowded up against him, punched his hips forward until Shane buckled back onto the mattress. He was on fire, trying to bring Shane with him. He lifted a foot onto the bed frame; all he wanted to do was give Shane what he deserved, fucking and fucking and taking unforgivingly. "Okay, omega?" he checked in, smoothing his hand comfortingly over his blazing skin.

“Yes,” Shane squeaked, back arched so finely that Ilya almost feared that he had been practicing with someone else, which made him fuck him harder, halfway to frantic. Shane gasped at this change, except his ragged breathing punched it through. “Good. Fuck.”

“You’re mine,” Ilya reminded him after pulling out and manhandling Shane onto his back, kissing his quivering knees. He gave them both a moment to catch their breaths, as well as an additional moment for Shane to return to him, because the omega was slipping away and away. A mess had been made of him already, his neck and chest angry with his flush. He looked like Ilya’s, smelled like it, too, the citrus all stomped out but permanently stuck in Ilya’s nose. “You are better than a fucking Cup,” the alpha swore, kissing him gently, a bit sloppily. “I won you. You’re mine.”

He hoisted Shane onto the pillows so he was comfortable when he re-entered him, his body giving way so sweetly, with nothing more than a winded little sigh. This was Ilya’s home, wherever he could do this, *just like this*, with the omega wrapped around him like a vine. He told Shane this, repeated it over and over and over until Shane’s fingers were losing their hold around his back. Ilya was consumed by his orange fire, joints aching with overexertion — but that meant that he would feel it tomorrow, too. They were both going to feel completely run down, but they were going to be on top of the world, and they were going to play together for the first time. They were going to be together there, and forever. Ilya was drunk off of his omega.

“Will you tell me if you’ve had enough?” the alpha panted to be sure, sweating into Shane’s neck. They were trapped within each other, steaming. He pulled away just enough to look him in the eye, grabbing on to what was left of him, a small little ring of brown left for him in his stare. “Hm, pretty boy? My perfect omega.” He felt suddenly and irreversibly overcome, and he held Shane’s face in his hand, resting much of his weight onto his forearms. He couldn’t hold on for much longer. “Oh, Shane.” His jaw dropped as he moved.

“It won’t be enough,” Shane whimpered, shaking his head, so sad. Ilya rocked his hips like he could make it enough, hard again, with urgency, and Shane was loud and high in his ear; the boring omega loved missionary the most, but he sort of seemed to like all of it the most. His lip was trembling, and was teary-eyed. Had he come, again? Maybe. Probably, and he would once more, but Ilya could tell he was getting tired of being so good. “It won’t be enough until you mark me for real.”

Ilya knew. God, he did, but now was as good a time as ever to *try*. Ilya kissed him breathless, then pecked his way down his jaw to his neck, his own breathing labored. He kissed over where he would one day stake his claim, and if he didn’t work so hard, if he weren’t so *patient*, he would not have waited to mark him, but tonight he did. When he did it, he would do it right, though they were already nearly there, with his cock buried inside of him.

Shane arched his back, scrambled into him, and Ilya knew what he needed, what he was looking for. Shane had been looking for it his entire life. Ilya had it.

He slid his palm into the omega’s. As he held it against the mattress, he locked his own fingers securely between Shane’s, squeezing the trembles right out of them. He slowed his pace, dragging his thrusts. He bit Shane on the neck with his sharpest teeth and sucked at the skin until he was sobbing his name and coming and begging to be knotted. Ilya also liked to

do what he was told, loved to do the things he wanted, the things his soul craved— so Ilya held Shane’s hand so he wouldn’t feel alone when Ilya’s knot made him drop smoothly and deeply.

In the early morning, just a few hours after Ilya cleaned them up and readied them for bed, they awoke before the sun. Sore, weighted with sleep, *quiet*, they lazily dressed and scurried their way out of the hotel and onto the beach. They stepped barefoot through the snow-soft sand, peeling away their clothes. Once naked, shrouded still in the dawn, they waded out into the water. Step by step, their knees were joined with their swallowed ankles, then their thighs, their hips, their waists.

Shane was sore. He *looked* sore, wincing slightly in the water, but Ilya didn’t quite feel bad, studying the welts on his neck and chest and the bruises on his ass before it submerged. Instead he felt accomplished, so much so that his chest hurt, like he was in the sky where the atmosphere was changing. Shane’s eyes were shining and soft and still so tired. He looked like the most satisfied omega in the world.

“Feel all right?” Ilya asked him. He could not think of the word for *refreshing*, his thoughts left in the sand. Shane had been a heater all night, and he had not declined Ilya’s whispered suggestion to cool off, yawning and sliding out of the bed as though he were made of goo. “Relaxing?”

Shane nodded. He turned his head up and rolled his shoulders. “Definitely.”

Ilya loved him so much he felt like crying. He was the happiest he had ever been in his life. It was probably just the awe of it all: he and Shane here at the beach before, it felt, the rest of the world woke up. The sky was one shade above dark blue. The ocean around them was vast, limitless, wrapped around them in privacy. The rushing sound that was always in Ilya’s head was much nicer when he could touch it and have it all around him, and have Shane with him, too.

“I am scared to want a family,” Ilya blurted, so surprised with himself that his eyes were large when Shane calmly looked at him. Ilya studied the sunrise and smelled oranges in the air. His mouth moved on its own. “There is almost nothing left of mine. It has never been right. I’m afraid of wanting a family and of having one and doing it wrong.”

Shane was silent for a while, just staring at him, muddy eyes open to the entire world. They stood about a foot apart. They had touched each other so much in the last hours, fucking, sleeping, that it barely felt any different when they did not touch at all. “You wouldn’t do it wrong,” the omega murmured, so confident in this that Ilya immediately didn’t believe him. “You haven’t done anything wrong in your life, Ilya.”

The alpha didn’t think that was true, either. He felt like he should have done more to help his mother and he would never feel like enough for his father, but he didn’t want to touch that on a morning like this. “If—” he started, but then stopped, feeling insecure, wanting to close up. The water moved Shane closer to him. “But if I were to take care of you, I would do it right.” He knew that. It was in him. “I promise you. I would make sure of it. It would be why I woke up every day.”

Shane began to smile; the sun began to rise. The two were the same. “What about,” he offered slowly, casting his hand absently across the water, “a baby? Would you have room for one of those?”

Holy shit. Ilya zoned out, his nerves turning to static, and Shane must have noticed his stupor, because he laughed merrily and splashed him gently. “Not now,” he clarified. “Not even close to now.” He was getting a little shy now, but he was still giddy. “But—I don’t know. In a while. Would you? A baby?”

“Two babies, three babies,” Ilya nodded enthusiastically, thinking of kids, of kids, of kids, of Shane having his children. They had never talked about it before. It was like discovering a new fucking planet. He was lucky he was in the water, where it would not look so stupid if he swayed. “Four. Five.”

“Five,” Shane repeated with a scoff, rolling his eyes. “I’m not having five babies.” He looked back at the shore, saw that it was empty, and then kissed Ilya almost carefully on the mouth. “We would take great care of a family,” he promised right against his lips. “You would take great care of me. I will take great care of you.”

Ilya wrapped his arm around Shane and squeezed his backside beneath the water. Shane winced again, but his grin was large, a flickering inside his pupils. “Let’s show everyone how much we take care of each other and win today. After we do, I’ll fuck you slow and careful and nice like I’m making sure it knocks you up.”

Ilya saw it. Hell, he heard it: one tiny, sharp inhale. The alpha’s head began to swim.

“Not now!” Shane then urged, scooting away, and when Ilya reached after him, their usual lighthearted chase ensued. Ilya wasn’t sure how, with how tired they were, but they brought the light and life out of each other, which was nothing other than magic. “Not for *years*. In, like, a decade.”

“Or right now,” Ilya argued, and, fuck, he needed to stop playing, because his body was believing it. He was scarily ready to give it all up, hockey and fame and fancy cars— but that was a little irrational, a symptom of his citrusy love drug. He let the waves catch him and carry him toward Shane, the universe knowing where they needed to be. “Right here. Ocean baby. Come on, get over here. I know you want it. Do not think you can hide that you are about to be in heat.” After all, Shane was so warm. He had wanted to be marked up. He was talking about babies. It was all so obvious. Ilya looked forward to delaying his flight.

He snagged Shane’s ankle with his hand like a shark, and the omega’s elated shriek, whether it be from the grab or Ilya’s words, was daybreak.

End Notes

I have no immediate plans to continue this series, but I'm wide open to any future fic ideas, as I will be writing away anyway :-) Thank you for reading. Thank you for enjoying these two with me. I'm grateful for it. Let me know what you think! <3

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